

OUR RESURRECTION BODY

Online Sermon: http://www.mckeefamily.com/?page_id=3567

1 Corinthians 15:35-58

Ever since God spoke the words “dust you are, dust you will return” (Genesis 3:19) humanity has been waiting to see how the soul is to be clothed upon Christ’s return. While the physical body is destined to return to the dust of the ground, Solomon says the soul returns to God in whom it came (Ecclesiastes 3:20). The soul however, is not going to return without some form of a body. In a twinkling of an eye, the dead and those alive in Christ will have their physical bodies transformed into new spiritual ones. For those who do not believe this is possible, Paul addresses their skepticism by answering two of their fundamental questions: how are the dead raised and what kind of body will they have? The first part of this sermon (verses 35-44) explains how Paul compares bodies and seeds to prove that God can give us a new spiritual body. The second part (verses 45-49) examines how Paul’s comparison of the First and Last Adam to accentuate the superiority of this new spiritual body over that of the physical one. The last part (50-58) will examine Paul’s argument that being clothed with the spiritual body will be the ultimate victory over death!

COMPARING BODIES AND SEEDS

³⁵ But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?”



By using a diatribe style of teaching, Paul poses two rhetorical questions that could be asked by a hypothetical debate partner. This partner could have been thinking about the Sadducees who did not believe the soul continued to exist after death and therefore could not be resurrected.¹ He could have also been referring to those who believed in the immortality of the soul but denied the resurrection of the body. Paul could also have in mind proponents of Judaism who believed the resurrected body would be identical to that of the body that died.² This of course raised questions

¹ Gary G. Porton, “[Sadducees](#),” ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 892.

² Leon Morris, [1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 7, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 213.

such as: can God really reassemble the ashes of those cremated and scattered to the wind or sea and how can God resurrect a body that was partially eaten by animals? Since numerous resurrection theories were common in the Greco-Roman world, it is even possible that his debate partner is none other than the church of Corinth³ who might have been confused as to which theory was indeed correct, if any!

³⁶ How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷ When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. ³⁸ But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body.

To those who view resurrection as an impossibility, Paul finds the skepticism of such questioning to be from “fools” and without merit.⁴ “Fool” echoes Psalms 14:1 with the implication that the skeptics of resurrection have failed to consider the power of God to form a body as He chooses.⁵ To prove his point Paul uses three analogies the first of which is a seed. For example, the seed that is sowed (a burial) while in the ground dies, decomposes and is destroyed in the form that it was sowed.⁶ The person who plants the seed cannot germinate or cause the seed to grow. Only God can transform different types of seeds into various types of plants. When new life emerges, the plant has a totally different form than that of the seed and yet remains the same living entity.⁷ In a similar manner, the body of a person that dies and is buried will not retain its



³ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, [The First Letter to the Corinthians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 798.

⁴ Leon Morris, [1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 7, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 214.

⁵ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, [The First Letter to the Corinthians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 800.

⁶ Leon Morris, [1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 7, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 214.

⁷ Craig Blomberg, [1 Corinthians](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 315.

original form upon resurrection but will be given a spiritual body that has emerged from the soul of that person.

³⁹ Not all flesh is the same: People have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. ⁴⁰ There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. ⁴¹ The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor.

After having shown that death is not always the end but the beginning of new life, Paul now uses two more analogies to show that the same God who appointed different bodies for



various purposes has the power to create a resurrected body that is unlike our present ones.⁸ The first analogy focuses on the various kinds of flesh as found in the sixth, fifth and fourth day of creation.⁹ Can there be any doubt that the body or flesh of people, animals, birds and fish differ radically from one another in both composition and splendor?¹⁰ The second analogy that Paul uses is heavenly bodies. As earthly bodies have their own kind of splendor so do heavenly bodies who emit light. Are not the

bodies of the sun, moon and various stars different from that of people, animals and plants? By using these analogies Paul is making a profound point: since God has already demonstrated the power to create and clothed the earth and heaven with various bodies then why would anyone doubt His power to cloth the dead in Christ with a spiritual body?

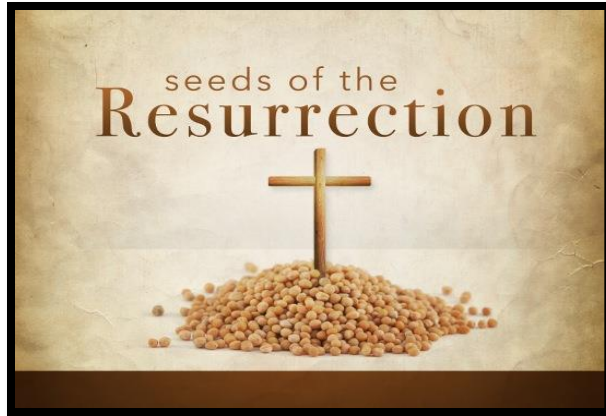
⁴² So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; ⁴³ it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴ it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

⁸ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, [The First Letter to the Corinthians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 804.

⁹ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, [The First Letter to the Corinthians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 804.

¹⁰ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, [The First Letter to the Corinthians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 804.

To finish answering question number two of the skeptic, “what kind of body will we get upon resurrection?,” Paul uses a series of couplets in antithetical parallelism to accentuate how radically different the resurrected body will be from that of our current ones.¹¹ When Paul says “the body that is sown is perishable” he is not only referring to the dead corpse in the ground but



also to the qualities of the body prior to death such as perishability, dishonor, weakness and the animated power of the human soul.¹²

“Perishability” is a reference to the death of the physical body as a result of the Fall (Genesis 3:19). “Dishonor” for Paul could either mean how poorly the world treats Christians (1 Corinthians 4:10-13) or the dishonor sin has brought to humanity.

“Weakness” is most likely a reference to physical or moral shortcomings (2 Corinthians 11:30; 12:5) of our natural bodies. In sharp contrast, upon resurrection

the spiritual body will be sown as imperishable, with glory, power and animated by the Spirit of God.¹³ For Paul, the most remarkable part of this transformation is when “the first installment, deposit or down payment” (2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5, Ephesians 1:14) the Holy Spirit, will be fully manifested in and through us as it is in Christ Himself!¹⁴ The resurrection body then is to be seen as a “glorious body, just as far surpassing the present body as the beautiful plant surpasses the seed from which it sprang.”¹⁵

¹¹ C. K. Barrett, [The First Epistle to the Corinthians](#), Black’s New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1968), 372.

¹² Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, [The First Letter to the Corinthians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 811.

¹³ C. K. Barrett, [The First Epistle to the Corinthians](#), Black’s New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1968), 372–373.

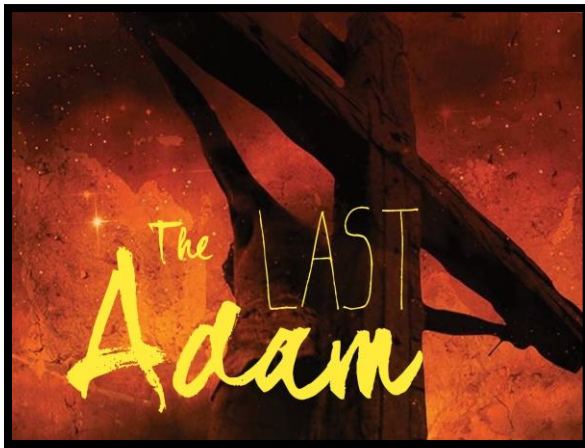
¹⁴ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, [The First Letter to the Corinthians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 818.

¹⁵ Leon Morris, [1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 7, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 217.

SUPERIORITY OF THE SPIRITUAL BODY

⁴⁵ So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven. ⁴⁸ As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. ⁴⁹ And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.

Paul now answers the first question of the skeptic: “how will our bodies be raised” through a comparison of the First and Last Adam. In the same way that the earthly, First Adam has passed down his characteristics of perishability, dishonor and weakness; the heavenly, Last



Adam, Jesus Christ, will pass down His characteristics of imperishability, honor and power.¹⁶ While the First Adam became a living being from the earth, the Last Adam is from heaven and will be a life-giving spirit by representing “God’s powerful and transforming presence that creates new life and raises people from the dead.”¹⁷ In a similar way that God breathed life into the slain Israelites in the Valley of Dry Bones (Ezekiel 37), Christ will bring to life His people by putting His breath or Spirit into them.¹⁸ Paul who had personally met Christ who was the

first to have received this new resurrected body (1 Corinthians 15:20), testifies that the new body will be powerful, glorious and wholly spiritual.¹⁹ Even though they have a deposit guaranteeing this new life, Paul reminds the church of Corinth that their current earthly bodies count for nothing (John 6:63) in comparison to the heavenly bodies they are about to receive. What a

¹⁶ Leon Morris, [1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 7, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 218.

¹⁷ Douglas J. Moo, [“The Letters and Revelation,”](#) in *NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 2355.

¹⁸ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, [The First Letter to the Corinthians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 820.

¹⁹ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, [The First Letter to the Corinthians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 820.

glorious day that will be when the image of God that was tarnished or corrupted in the Fall will be perfectly renewed and restored!²⁰

VICTORY OVER DEATH

⁵⁰ I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

To the proponents of Judaism who believed the resurrection body would be identical to that of the physical body that died, Paul reminds them that if this were so then none of them



would ever enter the kingdom of God! Flesh and blood that is sown perishable, with dishonor and weakness cannot enter into the kingdom of God that is eternal, glorious and powerful. Using the term “inherit” would evoke Jewish expectations of inheriting land. For Paul, God’s intention was not to simply give Israel the Promised Land of Canaan but to offer them an inheritance of a new earth, God’s kingdom and eternal life. The restoration of the land to an Edenic condition “now finds its

ultimate consummation in the resurrection of the dead and the complete renewal of creation that accompanies it.”²¹ The resurrection of the dead into new spiritual bodies is necessary for it is the vehicle in which God chooses to transform His children back into His likeness²² so that they might be able to dwell in His kingdom.

⁵¹ Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—⁵² in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

²⁰ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, [The First Letter to the Corinthians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 824.

²¹ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, [The First Letter to the Corinthians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 829.

²² Marion L. Soards, [1 Corinthians](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 351.

Using apocalyptic language Paul goes on to describe exactly what will happen upon Christ's second coming. The mystery that was unknowable without divine revelation²³ is that those die before the Parousia will not be at a disadvantage over those who are still living, for when Christ returns their bodies will be changed from the physical to the spiritual.²⁴ While the transformation process of those dead might be likened with the slow growth of a seed, the living will be transformed in a "twinkling of an eye," which is about the time it takes to cast a glance.²⁵



The moment Christ returns with the "voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God" (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17) the moment that the mortal

with be clothed with immortality and those sown in dishonor and weakness will be clothed in the glory and power of God Almighty!

⁵³ For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: Death has been swallowed up in victory. ⁵⁵ Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

When the perishable is clothed with imperishable, the mortal with immortality; death will be overthrown and defeated for it will not have any power over those transformed into the image of the Last Adam. Currently as an agent of God Himself, death still has a sting.²⁶ The sting of death is sin. Even though the law is holy, righteous and good (Romans 7:12) it will remain the source of sin's power as long as those sold as slaves to sin (Romans 7:14) remain part of the First Adam's nature. "Indeed, by setting before us the standard we ought to reach (the law) and never

²³ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, [The First Letter to the Corinthians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 829.

²⁴ Leon Morris, [1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 7, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 222.

²⁵ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, [The First Letter to the Corinthians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 830.

²⁶ C. K. Barrett, [The First Epistle to the Corinthians](#), Black's New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1968), 383.

do, it becomes sin's stronghold. It makes sinners of us all. It condemns us all."²⁷ Christ who was victorious over death (Romans 6:9) has satisfied the law's claims (Galatians 3:13) and in doing so replaced the reign of sin with the reign of grace (Romans 5:20).²⁸ The moment one is transformed with a new spiritual body in the likeness of the Last Adam, one shares in the same victory that Christ had over sin and its sting death.

APPLICATION

⁵⁸ Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

At the end of this passage Paul leaves his diatribe style of teaching and his skeptical, hypothetical debate partners and finishes by directing the church of Corinth to a practical goal of believing in the resurrection of the dead.²⁹ Paul tells those who are prone to fickleness³⁰ and changing their minds based on the shifting sands of culture, to remain steadfast in their belief in the resurrection or their work inside of the church could be perceived as vanity. If the physical body is not transformed from perishable to imperishable, mortal into immortal, weak into powerful, dishonorable into the glory of God; then death still has the victory and building one another up in the faith is futile. Praise be to God labor in His kingdom is never done in vain for His truly is the kingdom, power and glory; forever and ever Amen!

²⁷ Leon Morris, [*1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 7, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 223.

²⁸ Leon Morris, [*1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 7, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 223–224.

²⁹ C. K. Barrett, [*The First Epistle to the Corinthians*](#), Black's New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1968), 384–385.

³⁰ Leon Morris, [*1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 7, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 224.