

The Resurrection in God's Redemptive Plan

Bearing the Heavenly Image

The Resurrection Completed

1 Corinthians 15:35-50

- NOTE: I want to begin this morning by reading the opening question and Paul's first answer in found in verses 35-38, because that sets the direction for everything that follows.

Over the past several weeks, we have been looking at one of the greatest truths in all the Word of God — the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We have seen:

- That He died for our sins
- That He was buried
- That He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures

And because of that, everything has changed.

But there is a question that naturally follows all of this... and it is a question that every believer, at some point, has asked:

“What does the resurrection mean for me?”

“What will I be when this life is over?”

That very question is anticipated in our text from 1 Corinthians 15. In fact, he puts it this way in verse 35:

“How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?”

Though asked here in a skeptical spirit, it is also a question believers naturally wonder about.

- What will our bodies be like?
- Will we be the same?
- Will we be different?
- What does the future actually hold for the child of God?

In this passage, the Holy Spirit gives us one of the clearest answers in all the Bible to those questions. Not just that we will be raised... but what we will be when we are raised.

The truth of this passage, as we will see, is that we will not simply return to what we were, but we will be transformed into something far greater.

I. THE ILLUSTRATION — HOW THE RESURRECTION WORKS (VV. 35-38A)

A. The question (v. 35)

1. "Some *man*"

- a) This is speaking of the "some" in verse 34 that "have not the knowledge of God."
- b) It also goes back to verse 12 and the "some" that said there was no resurrection of the dead.
- c) These skeptics that didn't believe in the power of the Almighty and in the resurrection of the dead were mocking others in the church that did by asking them fairly ignorant questions. They weren't asking to learn, just to mock.

B. The correction (v. 36a)

"Thou fool..." — the one without the knowledge of God (v. 34) and that would disregard the provable fact of the resurrection.

1. "Fool" (ἄφρων) — the word means lack of sense, or without understanding.
2. As used here, the fool is one who does not understand that death is not the end for the believer, but the way God brings forth resurrection life.

C. The comparison (v. 36b-38)

1. "That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die" (v. 36b)
 - a) The Apostle begins the answer regarding death and the resurrection that the skeptics asked.
 - b) He uses an illustration of a seed that they would have all been familiar with — unless the seed dies and decays it cannot be made alive again to produce the harvest.
 - c) The seed doesn't produce anything while in storage — only after it is planted in the earth will it be able to be "quickened" (made alive) and produce fruit.

John 12:24

²⁴ Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

2. Verses 37 and 38 take that illustration of the seed dying in the ground and coming to life and applies it to the question that was asked about what the body will be when it is risen.
 - a) Vs. 37 — Paul's point is not that there is no connection between what is planted and what comes up again. His point is that the bare seed

put into the ground is not the final form. God takes that seed and gives it the body He designed for its later form of life.

In other words, the kernel planted does not come back up merely as another exposed kernel, but as the mature plant God designed to grow from it.

- b) Vs. 38a — to be clear, it is God that decides what that body will be, just as it was God that decided what Adam’s body looked like in original creation.

II. THE VARIETY — WHY DIFFERENT BODIES ARE POSSIBLE (VV. 38B-41)

A. Differences in design (v. 38b)

“To every seed his own body”

God has built variety into creation itself. Each seed produces according to its kind, because God has appointed it so.

B. Differences in kind (v. 39)

Men, beasts, fish, birds — they’re all different.

C. Differences in glory (vv. 40-41)

1. Although challenging, these verses are furthering the explanation of what we will be in glory, compared to what we are now.
2. Verse 40 contrasts the difference in the “celestial” and the “terrestrial.” It takes the point of verse 39 of the differences of life on earth to show that there are equal differences in heaven, each part of creation having its own purpose, its own glory.

The contrast is to show that our celestial body will be far different than here because its purpose will be as different then from now as is the celestial bodies in the heavens are from the earth in creation.

3. Verse 41 further explains the “glory” spoken of in the previous verse, showing, again, the differences in creation now, and showing again that God’s creation already contains different kinds of glory, and therefore we should not stumble at the thought of a body fitted for another, heavenly realm.
- If God can create different bodies for different realms, He can create one for eternity.

III. THE TRANSFORMATION — WHAT HAPPENS AT RESURRECTION (VV. 42-45)

A. Contrast in condition (vv. 42-44)

1. “So also is the resurrection of the dead” (v. 42a) — it gives life to that which was dead, and it gives that life in a far more glorious manner than anything we can imagine (Phil. 3:21; 2 Pet. 1:4).

1 John 3:2

² Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

2. Verses 42b-44 describe in terms we can understand, albeit limited in scope, what will happen at the resurrection. The Apostle Paul brings back the principle of sowing a seed in the ground so it can die in order to produce a better

life, a better harvest.

a) Corruption to Incorruption (v. 42b)

“Corruption” (φθορά), the decaying that takes place after death.

“Incorruption” (ἀφθαρσία), the exact opposite of “corruption” — our bodies will be raised to never be corruptible again.

b) Dishonour to Glory (vs. 43a)

“Dishonour” (ἀτιμία), literally, without honor, indignity. Our body is laid in the grave as one of decay, of reproach, of shame — a “vile body,” as in Phil. 3:21.

It will be raised from the grave with “glory” — with honor, with dignity, without shame, in “the garment of incorruption like His glorious body which we will put on” (J-F-B) — 2 Corinthians 5:2-4.

c) Weakness to Power (vs. 43b)

“Weakness” (ἀσθένεια), disease, infirmity, sickness — we die because of the frailty of the human body, but we are raised in “power” (δύναμις).

“Power” stands in opposition to “weakness,” showing what the others have shown — the resurrected body will never decay, never get sick, but will be given intrinsic power (power residing within) to live eternally.

d) Natural to Spiritual (v. 44)

(1) “Sown a natural body” — it is placed in the grave as the sin-stained, diseased body that

is sinful man.

- (2) “Raised a spiritual body” — it will be resurrected with a life we cannot fully comprehend in our sin-stained, fleshly mind today. What is meant by a “spiritual body” has been greatly debated, but considering its connection with “natural,” the simplest explanation is best — our resurrected body will no longer be affected by decay, by disease, by sin, by anything that defiles.
- (3) “There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body” — the conclusion to the point — if God has appointed a body suited for this present life, He has also appointed a body suited for the life to come. If our body here is designed to live in this life and on this earth, with all that means, then there is a form that we will take after the resurrection that is fitted perfectly for the form and place we will live then.

B. Contrast in origin (v. 45)

1. Referencing Genesis 2:7 — “The first man Adam was made a living soul” – Adam became, as the Hebrew words referenced for “living soul” (לִנְפֹשׁ הַחַי) show, a living, animated being, a being endowed with life.

Genesis 2:7

⁷ And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

2. “The last Adam was made a quickening spirit” — As Christ was active in creation, so through the risen Christ we receive resurrection life and the

spiritual body suited to it.

IV. THE IDENTITY — WHAT WE WILL BECOME (vv. 46-49)

A. The order of God's plan (v. 46)

God's order is natural first, then spiritual; our present earthly condition comes before the glorified condition to come.

B. The origin of our nature (v. 47)

1. We are of the earth now — "earthy" — we are made of the dust of the earth and we will return to the dust. Our form is that which God designed out of that dust to be what it is.
2. Our resurrected bodies will be "heavenly" — no longer bound to the confines of earth's limitations and forces, but one that will be designed for the heavens.

C. The outcome for the believer (vv. 48-49)

1. We have borne Adam's image — his form and attributes.
2. We shall bear Christ's image — when the believer is resurrected, we shall bear His image in a way suited to glorified humanity. The transfiguration of Christ gives us a glimpse of heavenly glory.

Matthew 17:2

² And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

- What we have in Adam will not define what we will be in Christ.

V. THE INABILITY — WHY THIS CHANGE IS NECESSARY (v. 50)

A. The limitation stated

“Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God”

B. The logic explained

This body will not be made new; it will die and decay in the grave to give way to a new life and a new body. Just as the seed sown in the ground does not remain in its bare form, but gives way to the body God designed for it, so our body is laid in the grave in corruption and will be raised in a glorified body fitted for eternity.

Conclusion:

As we come to the end of this passage — and really, the end of this portion of the chapter — we are reminded of something that ought to stir the heart of every believer.

This body we live in now...

- This body that grows weak
- This body that gets sick
- This body that is marked by sin and decay

Will not be forever.

The Word of God is clear:

- It is sown in corruption... but it will be raised in incorruption
- It is sown in dishonour... but it will be raised in glory
- It is sown in weakness... but it will be raised in power

And one day — “We shall bear the image of the heavenly.”

Not the image of Adam — the image of Christ.

Not corruptible — but eternal.

And all of this is possible for one reason — because Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

But that raises one final question: Will you be part of that resurrection?

The Bible makes it clear:

- There is a resurrection unto life,
- And there is a resurrection unto judgment.

If you have never trusted Christ, then this promise is not yet yours — but it can be.

For the believer — the best is not behind you... the best is yet to come.

One day, this body will be laid in the ground like a seed, but it will not stay there. The same God who designed the seed to rise again has promised that we will rise, and when we do, we shall bear the image of the heavenly.