

- d. “Natural” and “spiritual” are Paul’s most general descriptors for the present human body and the resurrection body. Thus the natural body is characterized by corruption, disgrace and weakness whereas the spiritual body is marked by incorruption, glory and power. *But the most fundamental distinction between these two bodies is their relation to the two archetypal men – the two “Adams”* (15:44-49). Specifically, the natural body corresponds to the nature and physicality of the first Adam and belongs to all who bear his image; conversely, the spiritual body corresponds to the nature and physicality of the Last Adam and belongs to all who bear His image.

This passage, then, advances Paul’s discussion of how it is that the resurrection body must be understood as differing profoundly from the present, natural body while also maintaining a very real continuity with it. The Corinthians were stumbling over the notion of bodily resurrection because they were conceiving it in terms of natural categories, principles and processes. That is, they were seeking to comprehend the resurrection body in terms of their present Adamic bodies. Paul wanted them to understand that the body which is raised is not the body that dies; the resurrection body must be defined and understood in terms of the resurrected body of Jesus Christ, the Last Adam.

God’s design in resurrection is not the reconstitution and reanimation of the body that goes into the grave. The body that will be raised at the Parousia is a different sort of body – a body that corresponds to Jesus’ resurrection body. Indeed, it cannot be otherwise given that a person’s resurrection is his participation in Jesus’ resurrection. Resurrection – new creation – has been realized in the man, Christ Jesus, and men share in resurrection by sharing in Him. The Spirit is the One who effects this participation, and He does so by producing and perfecting Jesus’ life in human beings. This is true of men’s spirits and it is true of their bodies: The resurrection body is men’s participation in Jesus’ *physicality*, which involves them possessing a body which, in every regard, conforms to Jesus’ resurrected body. This body is *their* unique body – it is the body which God assigned to their own individual hypostases (ref. again 15:38), but it is a consummately *human* body which, in its nature, is indistinguishable from the body of the True Man and therefore from the bodies of all of their fellow saints (Philippians 3:20-21). Thus the marrow of Paul’s argumentation in this passage:

- There are two kinds of human bodies: one associated with Adam and one associated with the Last Adam – the resurrected Christ (15:44-45).
- Moreover, the bodies associated with these “Adams” correspond to their respective natures, even as God created man to be spirit and body (15:47).
- Each of these “Adams” has a progeny which shares in his nature; so also those progeny possess a body according to the nature of their progenitor. Those who are of the first Adam have a body which conforms to his body and the same is true of those who are of the Last Adam (15:48-49).

- But the two groups of men are not exclusive of one another; all who are of the Last Adam were *first* of the original Adam. Such men are thus ordained to possess two bodies: first the body which conforms to the first Adam and then the body which conforms to the Last Adam (15:46, 49).

The above are the main points in Paul's argument, but they are set within his treatment of what he designated the *natural* and *spiritual* bodies. And in that regard, the first thing he insisted is that there *is* a spiritual body just as surely as there is a natural body (15:44b). All men – the Corinthians included – recognize the existence of a natural body; it is the body they are born with, possess throughout their lives and share with every human being. Thus it is the only body they know. This is precisely why the Corinthians were viewing the idea of bodily resurrection in terms of their present bodies. But Paul wanted them to understand that there is another sort of body – a *spiritual* body – and this is the body implicated in resurrection. As noted earlier, “spiritual” doesn't mean non-physical, but *non-natural*; it is a body which is of the Spirit in a way that the present natural body is not. Hays' comments are helpful:

*“By far the most graceful translation of verse 44, and the one that best conveys the meaning of Paul's sentence, is found in the Jerusalem Bible: ‘When it is sown it embodies the soul, when it is raised it embodies the spirit. If the soul has its own embodiment, so does the spirit have its own embodiment.’ That is Paul's point: **our mortal bodies embody the psyche (‘soul’), the animating force of our present existence, but the resurrection body will embody the divinely given pneuma (‘spirit’)**. It is to be a ‘spiritual body’ not in the sense that it is somehow made out of spirit and vapors, but in the sense that it is determined by the spirit and gives the spirit form and local habitation.” (emphasis added)*

The natural body is that which is inherited from Adam, while the spiritual body is that which is inherited from the resurrected Christ who is the Last Adam (Philippians 3:20-21). Both “Adams” are the progenitors of a race of men who share their image and likeness (cf. Genesis 5:3 with 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; cf. also Ephesians 4:20-24 with Colossians 1:18, 3:9-11). Each of these individuals is the fountainhead of a humanity derived from him; each of them is “Adam.” *But they are not progenitors of their respective progeny in the same way: Each has “offspring,” but in a different manner and through a different generative mechanism.* Paul summarized that difference in terms of the first Adam becoming a “*living soul*” and the Last Adam becoming a “*life-giving spirit*” (15:45).

The first thing to note about these descriptors is that they correlate with the two categories of *natural* and *spiritual*. Paul described Adam and Jesus in this way to help the Corinthians understand the fundamental difference between their natural body and the body that will be raised at the Parousia. Specifically, human beings derive their present, natural bodies from Adam whom God made a “*living soul*.” So also they will derive their spiritual bodies from the Last Adam, Jesus Christ, whom God made a “*life-giving spirit*.”

Whatever Paul meant by these two descriptors, it's clear that he saw them as clarifying the difference between the natural and spiritual body and the way those bodies relate to the two "Adams" from whom they derive.

- With respect to the first Adam, Paul alluded to the creation account in Genesis. In the specific passage he drew from, Adam is shown to have been created from the "dust of the ground" (Genesis 2:7; cf. 3:17-19). (The name *Adam* highlights that he is of the ground – *adamah* in Hebrew.) This passage also emphasizes that Adam, as all living creatures, derived his life from God. But he did so in a unique way: God didn't merely make Adam alive; He imparted His *own* life to him consistent with the fact that Adam was created as divine image-bearer: God breathed into Adam the breath of His own life and thus he became a "living soul."

Adam was given life in a unique manner to be a unique being, but he was yet a "living soul" not entirely unlike the other animate creatures God created. Though it is not said of them that God breathed His life into them, the Scripture grants such creatures the same designation of "living soul" (Genesis 1:20, 24, 30, 2:19, 9:12, 15-16). *In fact, this solidarity of Adam with other living creatures seems to be central to Paul's point:* Although Adam was uniquely God's image-bearer, he was also a natural creature; he was man determined by and conformed to the natural order and natural existence just as are other living (soulish) creatures. In Paul's language, Adam was *dust from the ground* (v. 47a): formed from the earth and thus possessing an earthy, natural physicality animated by the same life principle as the other animate creatures in whom was the "breath of life."

- In contrast, the Last Adam doesn't have his origin in the earth and the natural order, but in the heavenly realm (15:47b). By identifying Jesus in this way Paul wasn't denying His true and full humanity as a son of Adam, but was emphasizing that He is more than Adamic man: Jesus is the incarnate Son who bore Adamic flesh, but in order to destroy it and bring man to his foreordained destiny as image-son. Jesus has His origin in heaven and has entered man's humanness as Man of the Spirit – man as enlivened, empowered and led by the Spirit; man as Man indeed.

Jesus transcended Adam by being man in consummate realization. Thus He both condemned Adam and fulfilled him. He is the *Last* (consummate) Adam, but also the *Last Adam*: Like his prototype, Jesus is the fountainhead of a humanity that shares in His image and likeness. He is Man of the Spirit on behalf of mankind.

These observations help to illumine Paul's meaning in identifying Adam as "living soul" and Jesus as "life-giving spirit." Adam was a "soulish" being – man as taken from the earth and conforming to the natural order of existence; Jesus is a "spiritual" being – man according to the Spirit and conforming to the heavenly order. Three things about this distinction ought to be noted:

- 1) First, it's clear that Paul regarded Jesus as possessing a relationship with the Spirit which wasn't shared by Adam. Adam was "of the Spirit" in that he was created by the agency of the Creator-Spirit (Genesis 1:1-27). So also man's nature as divine image-bearer afforded Adam a unique relation to the Spirit among God's creatures: Man was created for intimate spirit-to-Spirit communion with God and the Spirit is the agent and mediator of that relationship. However, this relationship wasn't realized in Adam – *even in his original unfallen state*. Adam was the *first* man; he was the introduction of man, but as the prototypical promise of the Man to come – the Last Adam in whom man would become man indeed. Jesus is True Man and therefore *Man of the Spirit* in full conformity to the divine design. Again, man is uniquely a spiritual being, but his spirituality has been fully realized in Jesus Christ. For in Jesus we see man as God intended – man as the dwelling of God in the Spirit. *In every respect and extent, Jesus is man according to the life, power, and leading of the Spirit.*

- 2) Jesus is Man of the Spirit in a way that Adam wasn't, but on behalf of Adam's race; the goal of His person and work is that mankind should be transformed into His image and likeness. But it was the Spirit who made Jesus of Nazareth True Man, and so it is with those who share in Him. Men are *christified* (transformed into Christ-likeness) by their union with the resurrected Lord, but this transformation is the work of the Spirit. He was the Spirit of creation and He is the Spirit of re-creation. He was the "life-giving Spirit" in the case of Jesus of Nazareth – with respect to His resurrection as well as His incarnation, and He is the same Spirit in relation to all those who share in Jesus. The Spirit mediates Christ to men and perfects His resurrection life and likeness in them; in that way, the Spirit has become the Spirit of Christ and, *functionally*, even Christ Himself (cf. Romans 8:9-11 with 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19; Ephesians 2:19-22, 3:14-17; Philippians 1:19; Colossians 1:25-27; 1 Peter 1:10-11).

- 3) The above observations highlight the Spirit's critical role in relation to Jesus' resurrection life and men's participation in it. They substantiate the contention that Paul's expression, "life-giving spirit," ought to be rendered "life-giving *Spirit*." Translators and commentators have often avoided this rendering because it seems to create the problem of confusing – and perhaps even collapsing into one – the two divine persons of the Son and Spirit. Paul was certainly not denying the individual hypostases of Son and Spirit or in any way confusing them. However, his argument is moved in the wrong direction and his point is compromised (if not missed) when his expression isn't treated as referring to the Holy Spirit. Paul wasn't saying that, in His resurrection, Jesus has become some sort of "spirit" who is able to impart life to men. *Rather, he was pressing the intimate connection between the resurrected Son and the Spirit in regard to the work of creational renewal and christiformity.* Understood properly, it is not at all inaccurate to say that Jesus has become "life-giving Spirit."

“This taking possession of the Holy Spirit by Christ is so absolute an appropriation that the apostle Paul can say of it in 2 Corinthians 3:17 that the Lord (that is, Christ as the exalted Lord) is the Spirit... the Holy Spirit has become entirely the property of Christ, and was, so to speak, absorbed into Christ or assimilated by Him. By the resurrection and ascension Christ has become the quickening Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). He is now in possession of the seven Spirits (that is, the Spirit in His fullness), even as He is in possession of the seven stars (Rev. 3:1). (Herman Bavinck)

The Spirit has, in the fullness of the times, become the Spirit of Christ. Jesus was made alive in the Spirit (1 Peter 3:18) and, by His Spirit, joins men to Himself to become men of the Spirit in Him. Sinclair Ferguson comments: *“Christ has become ‘life-giving Spirit.’ Having the Spirit is the equivalent, indeed the very mode, of having the incarnate, obedient, crucified, resurrected and exalted Christ indwelling us so that we are united to him as he is united to the Father.”*

Even now, though they possess natural Adamic bodies according to the *“image of the earthy,”* Christians are *“of the Spirit”* in that Jesus’ life-giving Spirit has made their spirits alive so as to share in His life. Already they are raised up in Christ, seated in the heavenlies in Him as their lives – which is to say, *Jesus’ life in them* – are hidden in God Himself (cf. Ephesians 1:18-23 with 2:1-6; also Colossians 3:1-4). Christians are *now* sharers in Jesus’ resurrection life (or they are not Christians at all – Romans 8:9-10; cf. John 6:48ff) and their present resurrection in Him is the first fruits; it is the earnest and surety of the bodily resurrection to come. Man is spirit *and* body; how is it possible that men could share in the True Man only in part? Christians are those who are *“in Christ”*: sharers in His life as those in whom He lives out and perfects His own consummate humanness. And Jesus is True Man – *spiritual* Man – in body and spirit, and so it must be with those who are in Him. As surely as Christ’s people now bear the bodily likeness of the first man, they will bear the bodily likeness of the Last Man (14:49).

And implied by this is the crucial truth that the resurrection body will not in any way or to any extent involve the rejuvenation of the natural body. As thoroughly as a plant differs from its seed, so the spiritual body will differ from the natural body. Indeed, as a seed must die and be destroyed in order for the plant to come forth, so the natural body must die and utterly perish as the necessary precursor to the emergence of the spiritual body. In Paul’s words, *“flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God”* (15:50). That which is of the present natural order – the old creation – has no place in the new creation – not because it’s disallowed or disqualified, *but because the new creation stands upon and proceeds out of the demise of the old creation.* That which exists in corruption must perish and be done away in order for incorruption to come. This was true of Jesus Himself and it is true of His people (Romans 6:1-11; Galatians 2:20). In terms of this context, the presence of the *spiritual* – the incorrupt and incorruptible – implies the demise of the *natural*. So it is with men’s spirits, and so it is with their bodies. That which is born of flesh is flesh; that which is born of the Spirit is spirit (John 3:1-6).