

# **Challenges Christians Face**

## **The Resurrection Body**

*1 Corinthians 15:35-49*

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# The Resurrection Body

## Scripture

We continue our study in *The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians* in a series I am calling *Challenges Christians Face*.

There is a lot of confusion in our culture about what happens to us after we die. Some believe in reincarnation, and so they think that we will come back to earth as a different person or being. Others believe that we simply cease to exist. And yet others believe that we become angels. The apostle Paul, however, clearly teaches what happens to Christians after we die. Let's learn about this in a message I am calling, "The Resurrection Body."

Let's read 1 Corinthians 15:35-49:

<sup>35</sup> But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" <sup>36</sup> You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. <sup>37</sup> And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. <sup>38</sup> But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. <sup>39</sup> For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. <sup>40</sup> There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another. <sup>41</sup> There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.

<sup>42</sup> So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. <sup>43</sup> It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. <sup>44</sup> It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. <sup>45</sup> Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. <sup>46</sup> But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. <sup>47</sup> The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the

second man is from heaven. <sup>48</sup> As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. <sup>49</sup> Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. (1 Corinthians 15:35-49)

## Introduction

*The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians* was written to correct many errors that the Corinthian believers had embraced.

One of the errors that some of the Corinthian believers had embraced is that there is no bodily resurrection for Christians. Chapter 15 is Paul's teaching regarding our bodily resurrection.

In verses 1-11 Paul set down the evidence for Christ's bodily resurrection from the dead.

In verses 12-19 Paul showed that because of Christ's bodily resurrection from the dead, there *can* be a bodily resurrection for Christians.

In verses 20-28 Paul showed that because of Christ's bodily resurrection from the dead, there *must* be a bodily resurrection for Christians.

In verses 29-34 Paul pointed out that it would be meaningless to live as a Christian if there was no bodily resurrection for Christians.

In verses 35-49, which is our text for today, Paul discussed *how* our bodies are raised and *what* our resurrection bodies will be like.

## Lesson

So, in our lesson today we learn about the Christian's resurrection body.

Let's learn about this as follows:

1. The Manner of the Resurrection Body (15:35a; 36)
2. The Nature of the Resurrection Body (15:35b; 37-49)

## I. The Manner of the Resurrection Body (15:35a; 36)

First, let's examine the manner of the resurrection body.

Paul asked and answered a question regarding the manner of the resurrection body.

### A. The Question (15:35a)

The question Paul asked regarding the manner of the resurrection body is in verse 35a: **“But someone will ask, ‘How are the dead raised?’”** That is, *how* can a dead, disorganized, disintegrated body live again?

### B. The Answer (15:36)

Paul's answer is in verse 36.

Paul began by rebuking those who questioned a bodily resurrection for Christians. He said, **“You foolish person!”** (15:36a). Only a **foolish person** questions the power of a sovereign, almighty God.

Then Paul explained that death is not an *obstacle* to, but rather a *means* to, a resurrection body. He said in verse 36b: **“What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.”** Just as a seed must die to produce a plant, even so our present body must die to produce our resurrected body. In both cases, death is the means to a new body. Disorganization and disintegration must take place before there can be reorganization and reintegration.

So, the question is: “How are the dead raised?”

And the answer is: God will raise a resurrection body from a dead body by his own sovereign, almighty power.

## II. The Nature of the Resurrection Body (15:35b; 37-49)

And second, let's examine the nature of the resurrection

body.

Paul also asked and answered a question regarding the nature of the resurrection body.

*A. The Question (15:35b)*

The question Paul asked regarding the nature of the resurrection body is in verse 35b: “But someone will ask. . . , **‘With what kind of body do they come?’**” That is, *what kind* of resurrection body will Christians possess?

*B. The Answer (15:37-49)*

Paul’s answer is in verses 37-49.

He said that our resurrection body will be a continuous body, a different body, and a heavenly body. Let’s examine each part of the answer.

1. The resurrection body will be a continuous body (15:38)

First, the resurrection body will be a continuous body.

Paul said in verse 38: **“But God gives it [i.e., the seed] a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body.”**

There is a continuity between the seed sown and the plant that is produced. The seed changes radically, but it continues to have the same life form. A wheat seed does not become barley, and a grass seed does not become corn. **God** has given **each kind of seed its own body**, whose identity continues into the grown plant.

After Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, he was not initially recognized until he revealed himself to people. But once he revealed his identity, he was recognizable. The disciples knew his face, and recognized his wounded side and pierced hands and feet.

Similarly, our resurrected bodies as Christians will have a continuity with the bodies we have now. Our present bodies will die and they will change form, but they will still be *our* bodies.

Surely, it is not hard to believe that the God who has worked this process daily through the centuries in his creation of plants, will be able to do it again with Christians when we received resurrected bodies.

2. The resurrection body will be a different body (15:37; 39-44)

Second, the resurrection body will be a different body.

Although our resurrection body will be continuous with our present body, it will nevertheless be a different body. So Paul said in verse 37, **“And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain.”** God, in accordance with his own power and pleasure, causes the plant produced to be different than the seed sown.

Paul then noted that there is a difference in the bodies of earthly creatures. He said in verse 39, **“For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish.”** God, in his wisdom, created all creatures differently.

John MacArthur said that he read that there are some six hundred octodecillion different combinations of amino acids. An octodecillion is 10 to the 108th power, or 1 followed by 108 zeros. Amino acids are the building blocks of all life. Not only does each type of plant and animal life have a distinct pattern of amino acids, but each individual plant, animal, and human being has its own unique grouping of them. No two flowers, snowflakes, seeds, blades of grass, or human beings—even identical twins—are exactly alike. Yet each is completely identified with its own species or kind.

Those two facts make one of the strongest scientific evidences against evolution. No matter what we may eat, no matter how specialized or unbalanced our diet may be, and no matter what our environment may be, we will never change into another form of life. We may become healthier or more sickly, heavier or lighter, but we will never be anything but a human being and never any

human being but the one we are. The biological codes are binding and unique. There is no repeatable or demonstrable scientific proof that one form of life has changed or could change into another.<sup>1</sup>

There are even differences between terrestrial and celestial bodies, as Paul said in verse 40, **“There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another.”**

Not only are the heavenly bodies vastly different from the earthly bodies, they are greatly different from each other. So, Paul said in verse 41, **“There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.”**

Regarding the differences among the stars, Donald Peattie has written:

Like flowers, the stars have their own colors. At your first upward glance all gleam white as frost crystals, but single out this one and that for observation and you will find a subtle spectrum in the stars. The quality of their lights is determined by their temperatures. In the December sky you will see Aldebaran as pale rose, Rigel as bluish white and Betelgeuse orange to topaz yellow.<sup>2</sup>

Every star is different, just as every plant is different, every animal is different, and every person is different. God has infinite creative capacity, including the capacity to make infinite variety. Why would anyone think it hard for him to re-create and resurrect human bodies, no matter what form they may be after death?

Now, having given us several illustrations from nature of the differences among various bodies, Paul made application of these illustrations to the differences between the present body and the future resurrection body of Christians.

He said in verse 42a, **“So is it with the resurrection of the dead.”** In other words, Paul said, “Just as nature’s bodies differ,

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<sup>1</sup> John MacArthur, *1 Corinthians* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1996), 435.

<sup>2</sup> John MacArthur, *1 Corinthians* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1996), 435.

so, will the resurrection body differ from the present body.” Here are several ways in which the resurrection body will be different.

First, the body is sown perishable, but it will be raised in imperishable. Paul said in verse 42b, **“What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable.”** The body of a Christian is sown (i.e., that is, it has died and is buried in the grave) perishable, but it will be raised imperishable.

Second, the body is sown in dishonor, but it will be raised in glory. Paul said in verse 43a, **“It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory.”** It is sown an unattractive body, but it will be raised in a resplendent body.

Third, the body is sown in weakness, but it will be raised in power. Paul said in verse 43b, **“It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.”** It is sown without any strength, but it will be raised with incredible strength.

And fourth, the body is sown a natural body, but it will be raised a spiritual body. Paul said in verse 44a, **“It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.”** It is sown in the flesh, but it will be raised by the Spirit of God. And so Paul concluded in verse 44b, **“If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.”**

The great illustration of the resurrection body that is different is that of Jesus’ resurrection body. Before Jesus’ death he had a human body, just like every body else. It was a **natural body**. His body was subject to weakness and failure and even death. However, after his resurrection Jesus had a **spiritual body**. It was a resurrection body. He could be touched, and he could eat. However, he could also appear and disappear at will. He could suddenly appear in a locked room. His body was wonderfully different. And that is the kind of body that all Christians will receive too.

3. The resurrection body will be a heavenly body (15:45-49)

And third, the resurrection body will be a heavenly body. Citing Genesis 2:7, Paul said in verse 45: **“Thus it is writ-**



ten, **‘The first man Adam became a living being’; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.**” Just as Adam gave human life to all people, so Christ gave spiritual life to all his people, that is, to Christians.

That is why Paul said, **“But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual”** (15:46). All people have a natural, human nature. However, at some point when we are regenerated we receive a spiritual nature. So, the natural nature precedes the spiritual nature.

Then, moving back to Adam and Christ, Paul noted that **the first man**, that is, Adam, **was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man**, that is, Christ, **is from heaven** (15:47). Adam was an ordinary human being, but Christ exceeds Adam’s glory because Christ came from heaven.

Paul then said in verse 48, **“As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven.”** In other words, Adam’s descendants are like him. They inherit his physical nature. Similarly, Christ’s own are like him. They inherit his spiritual nature. Therefore, Paul said in verse 49, **“Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.”** That is, we shall be like Christ with resurrected, heavenly bodies.

## Conclusion

So, what happens to Christians when we die?

At the time of our death, our bodies stop functioning. We are buried. Our bodies will decay and decompose, if they are not cremated. And we await the return of Jesus Christ.

At the time of our death, our spirits go immediately to heaven. We go into the presence of God where we will enjoy unimaginable joy and bliss and delight for the rest of eternity.

At some point in the future, God the Father is going to send the Son back to earth to wrap up history as we know it. When Je-

## Challenges Christians Face

When we return again our spirits will be reunited with our bodies. It is at that point that we receive our resurrection bodies. God, by his power will raise up our old, earthly bodies and give us our new, heavenly bodies.

Paul assured us that we will have new resurrection bodies because Jesus was raised from the dead on that first Easter Sunday. Jesus was seen by Cephas, the twelve, more than five hundred brothers at one time, James, the apostles, and finally by Paul himself after his resurrection. He is alive, and he has a resurrection body.

Do you know for sure what will happen to you after you die? You can receive a resurrection body if you put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Acknowledge that he paid the penalty for your sin. And when you repent and believe, you can receive the gift of eternal life.

I pray that you will do so today. Amen.

# Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ  
and **membership** in his church family,  
develop them to Christlike **maturity**,  
equip them for their **ministry** in the church  
and life **mission** in the world,  
in order to **magnify** God's name.*

## Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

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**PRAYER:**

Our Father, thank you for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thank you that his resurrection guarantees our own resurrection. Thank you that his resurrection guarantees the destruction of the evil powers and authorities. Thank you that his resurrection guarantees that he will hand over the kingdom to his Father. Thank you that his resurrection motivates our present service. And thank you that we will receive a resurrection body that is continuous, different, and heavenly.

And for this I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

**BENEDICTION:**

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.

**CHARGE:**

Now, brothers and sisters, go and serve the risen Jesus Christ!