

“OUR RESURRECTION”

I. Introduction

- A. People have a lot of interest in what heaven will be like.
 - 1. This explains the popularity of what someone has described as “heaven tourism” books.
 - 2. These books are written by people who have been resuscitated from near-death experiences, and they claim to provide eyewitness accounts of what heaven is like.
 - 3. You may be aware of some of the headlines that these books have made in the past few months.
 - 4. A little while back, the writer of a book called *The Boy Who Came Back from Heaven* admitted that he made it all up.
 - 5. More recently, the Southern Baptist Convention announced that it has decided to remove all heaven tourism books from its Lifeway Christian bookstores.

- B. The problem with these books is that they undermine the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture.
 - 1. We need to accept the fact that there are many things about heaven that will remain a mystery to us until we get there.
 - 2. We also need to trust that God has told us what we need to know about heaven in his Word.
 - 3. In tonight’s sermon text from 1 Corinthians 15, we learn three important things about the kind of existence that the redeemed will enjoy in heaven.

4. These verses tell us that our heavenly life will be embodied, imperishable, and victorious over death.

II. The Body

- A. Our passage begins with Paul addressing some questions that were being asked by those in Corinth who denied the future resurrection of believers, specifically: "How are the dead raised? With what sort of body do they come?"
 1. In other words, how is it possible for decomposed corpses to be made alive again?
 2. Are they just going to crawl out of their graves in their decomposed state and start walking around again?
 3. What good would that be?
 4. Who would even want that?
 5. The people who were raising these questions were not interested in having their questions answered.
 6. They were asking the questions to make a point.
 7. They were ridiculing the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead.
 8. This is why Paul responds to them by saying, "You foolish person!"
- B. After issuing that rebuke, Paul then employs a metaphor to teach us something about the resurrection body.
 1. If you have a seed, the only way it is going to sprout into something that is alive is if you first plant it in the ground.
 2. In a sense, the seed has to die before it can produce life.

3. On top of that, the life that the seed produces does not look anything like the seed.
 4. While there is an organic relationship between the seed and the plant that grows from it, there is also a world of difference between the two.
 5. The same things are true of the natural body and the resurrection body.
 6. There is an organic connection between the body that you have now and the body that you will have in the world to come.
 7. Your resurrection body will truly be your body, but it will be a different kind of body than your present body.
- C. Paul explains this further by pointing out how God has made different kinds of bodies.
1. Human bodies are of a different nature than animal bodies.
 2. Your flesh is not like the flesh of a snake, or a bird, or a fish.
 3. The physical bodies of earthly creatures are of a different nature than the heavenly bodies of angelic beings.
 4. Each has its own dignity and glory, but they are not the same.
 5. The same is true of the sun, the moon, and the stars.
 6. Paul's point is that if God has made the world with all of these different types of bodies, then he can certainly take a human body and transform it into a body with an entirely new nature.
 7. This is what God is going to do on the day of Christ's return.
 8. You will have a body in the world to come, and it will really be your body, but it will be of a different nature than your present

body.

III. Raised Imperishable

- A. This brings us to the second thing that this passage teaches us about life in heaven: it will be an utterly imperishable life.
1. Paul continues to use the seed metaphor here, explaining how the body that is sown in the ground when we die is qualitatively different than the body that will be raised on the day of Christ's return.
 2. The body that is sown into the ground at burial is perishable.
 3. It is subject to sin, weakness, sickness, death, and decay.
 4. But the body that is raised is imperishable.
 5. It is impervious to all threats to its existence.
 6. The body is sown in dishonor.
 7. As much as we try to treat the bodies of those who die in a dignified manner when we bury them, there is nothing that we can do to cover over the dishonor of being dead.
 8. But the resurrection body is dignified with a glory that is beyond all comparison.
 9. The body is sown in weakness, but it is raised in power.
 10. The body that is sown is a natural body, but the body that is raised is a spiritual body.
- B. What does Paul mean when he speaks of a "spiritual body"?
1. In this context, "spiritual" does not mean 'non-physical.'

2. We know that that cannot be Paul's meaning because Jesus' resurrected body was physical.
 3. It was a body that could eat food and be touched by others.
 4. In our text, Paul is using the term "spiritual" in the same way that he used it back in chapter 2 of this letter, where he said this: "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one." (vv. 14-15)
 5. A spiritual person is someone who is guided by the Holy Spirit.
 6. This is set in contrast to the natural person, who is guided by his fallen human nature.
 7. When Paul contrasts the natural body with the spiritual body in our text, he is saying that the body that we will have in the world to come will be a body that is no longer subject to this present sin-cursed existence.
 8. Instead, the resurrection body will be completely subjected to the influence of the Holy Spirit.
 9. When the Christian is raised from the dead, his entire being — body and soul, heart and mind — will be perfectly led by the Spirit of God.
- C. Having explained the qualitative difference between our present bodies and our resurrection bodies, Paul then points us to the source of this resurrection life.
1. Just as Adam is the source of our present mode of existence, Jesus is the source of the resurrection mode of existence.
 2. By virtue of his completed work in his mediatorial office, Christ has become a life-giving spirit.

3. In other words, Jesus is a man who has come into full possession of the Spirit.
4. He sends the Spirit to apply his saving work in the lives of his people and give us the gift of eternal life.
5. The Holy Spirit comes to us as the Spirit of Christ, the Messianic Spirit.
6. He comes to us fully qualified to conform us to the likeness of Christ.
7. This is why Paul refers to Christ as the last Adam.
8. As commentator Leon Morris explains, "Adam was the progenitor of the race, and his characteristics are stamped on the race. Christ is *the last Adam*, the progenitor of spiritual men. By virtue of his office as *the last Adam* He stamps His characteristics on those who are in Him." [Morris, 229]
9. In our natural state, we bear the image of the man of dust.
10. In our glorified spiritual state, we will perfectly bear the image of the man of heaven.

IV. Victory over Death

- A. This brings us to the third thing that this passage teaches us about life in heaven: it will be a life that is characterized by total victory over death.
 1. Our present mode of existence is subject to death.
 2. This is why we need to enter into a new mode of existence if we are going to enter into the kingdom of God.
 3. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.
 4. Our bodies need to be transformed.

5. This is what will happen on the day of Christ's return, the day that will be heralded by the blowing of the last trumpet.
 6. On that great and glorious day, the dead will be raised imperishable and the bodies of all living believers will be transformed and made fit for heavenly life.
- B. When that great event takes place, it will be manifest to all that death's sting has been utterly taken away with respect to the Christian.
1. As Paul explains, "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."
 2. The law sets forth the standard that to which our lives are to be conformed, and we all fail to live up to that standard.
 3. Because of this, we are all subject to the curse of the law.
 4. But through faith in Christ we are set free from the law as a covenant of works, which means we are set free from the curse of the law.
 5. The law still has validity for us as a rule of life, but it no longer has the power to condemn us because Christ bore its curse on our behalf.
 6. Our bodies still have to die, but where sin is pardoned death has been robbed of its sting.
 7. This leads Edward Fisher to offer this counsel to the believer: "if death creep upon you, and attempt to devour you; then say, 'Thy sting, O death, is sin; and Christ... has fully vanquished sin, and so deprived thee of thy sting; and therefore I do not fear any hurt that thou, O death! canst do unto me.'" [*The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, 174]

8. This is why Paul can say in his letter to the Philippians that death is “gain” for the Christian.
 9. Death brings us into a closer communion with Christ than anything that we can experience in this life. (see Phil 1:21)
- C. Our text concludes with an exhortation to “be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”
1. When Paul speaks of doing “the work of the Lord” he is not talking about our general cultural activities.
 2. He is not saying that the Christian musician can be confident that the pieces that he composes will endure into the world to come.
 3. This is not to say that our cultural labors are unimportant.
 4. They are very important, and we are called to do them to the glory of God.
 5. God uses the work that we do in the broader culture to extend his providential care over this present world.
 6. That being said, our cultural labors are provisional and temporary.
 7. They will not endure forever.
 8. When Paul speaks of the “work of the Lord” not being in vain he is saying that our prayers and efforts in support of the church’s ministry are not in vain
 9. The church’s work of ministering the gospel brings results that will last forever.

V. Conclusion

- A. There is a lot about heaven that remains hidden to us because God has not chosen to reveal it to us.
- B. But one thing that comes across loud and clear in the Bible is that our heavenly existence will transcend anything that we could ever imagine.
- C. Paul makes this point in his second letter to the Corinthians, where he likens our present existence to a tent and our heavenly home to a glorious building.
- D. He writes, “For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.” (2 Cor. 5:1–4)
- E. That is the hope that awaits you as a Christian.
- F. Though everything in this life is fleeting and impermanent and subject to decay, you have an inheritance in heaven that will last forever.