
The Resurrection and the Body

1 Corinthians 15:35-49

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(Note: this message is written more in outline form, due to many providences of the week it was prepared. For the full message, listen to the MP3. A complete transcription may be made available at a later date. RRK)

Do you think much about the future?

Planning...

Dreaming...

Hoping...

Do you ever get tired of this body?

Its tendency to sin...

Its tendency to fail...

Its tendency to distract...

Do you think much about our resurrection?

What God has said will be...

What you think it might be like...

If you don't think about it much, then how can you want it much?

Examination - How is the Resurrection Possible (v. 35)

There is a way to ask questions that comes from humility and seeks to understand...

There is a way to ask questions that comes from doubt and seeks to undermine...

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

Two skeptical questions...

A Question of Means

What causes a resurrection? What makes it happen?

This questions the power of God to cause the resurrection. It flows out of the denial of the possibility of the resurrection that undermines the resurrection of Christ.

A Question of Mode

What kind of body could we possibly have in the resurrection?

This questions the wisdom of God to design the resurrection. It argues that the body that dies is destroyed by death. How can that body come back to life. Wouldn't we just be zombies?

Hidden in this is a troubling question: what about those lost at sea, burned completely, cremated? This is more of a question of inquiry. The answer is still the same.

That is what is next.

Evidence - It is Like Things in Nature (v. 36-41)

The apostle answers from *metaphors*. He presents evidence from nature. This is not proof, but analogy.

³⁶ You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.

Here are some instructive illustrations. Listen, he says. it is like these clearly observable things around us.

A scathing response - maybe better, "you unthinking, inobservant person. Can't you see how senseless your objection is?"

Examples from God's Creation

As to the change in the bodies (v. 37-38)

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. ³⁸ But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body.

What you sow must die before it comes to life. The seed dies. The outer shell is broken. The inner life is released. If you put the plant in the ground, it simply becomes fertilizer.

What you sow in the ground comes up in a different form. But it is all according to God's intricate design. The assertion is about God making it the way it is. The natural world is designed by God to reflect the greater realities of the spiritual world.

As to the differences in the bodies (v. 39-41)

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. 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. 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.

All around us we can see that God has made life of different kinds. There are different kinds of bodies, of flesh in this world. And in the heavens, there are different kinds of glory, probably referring to shining, or illumination.

The resurrection body will be related to our natural or physical body in the same way that an oak tree is related to an acorn: the same but wonderfully different. The same, but more glorious.

Exhibition of Redemptive Principles

Out of Death, Life

God has designed that life comes out of death. Into newly fallen garden comes the prophecy of life from a descendant. Out of Abraham's long past childbearing body comes a son. Out of Israel's defeat, exile and ignominious return comes the once and future King. Out of a horrific death on the cross, comes the resurrection of Jesus. Out of spiritual death and depravity, comes life by the Word and Spirit. One day, out of the ground, we will rise, we will rise.

Continuity and Discontinuity

A fundamental principal in God's plan and purpose is the idea of continuity and discontinuity. It is imbedded in these metaphors. It is deeply woven through all of God's work whether in creation and redemption.

A seed is unlike the plant that grows up from it – discontinuity.

A seed yields a plant of the same kind which then produces its own seed – continuity.

The old is unlike new that grow up from it – discontinuity.

The old yields the new that fulfills it in Christ and the church – continuity.

Explanation - Understand a Series of Contrasts (v. 42-49)

The apostle also answers from *typology*. He presents a Biblical explanation.

⁴² So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is 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.

⁴⁵ Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. 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. ⁴⁹ Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

So it is with the resurrection...

In its Qualities (v. 42-44)

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The seed, the body into the ground is raised the same, but gloriously changed.

Sown	Raised
Perishable	Imperishable
Humiliation (dishonor)	Glory
Weakness	Power
Natural	Spiritual

In its Order (v. 45-46)

⁴⁵ Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual.

God has designed that the first passes away and the second take its place.

First Adam	Last Adam
A living being	A life-giving spirit
Natural is first	Spiritual is second

But notice that this begins while the old is still alive. The last Adam is raised in the old fallen world and brings the life of new into it. The spiritual life is born into natural while it still exists. This is the new birth. It is our resurrection. It is the beginning of the new creation. It entered this world with Jesus' resurrection. It enters my life by regeneration. I have passed through the death of the cross and am raised with Christ and am now seated with Him in heaven, having a hidden life in Him that will be revealed when He comes. Then, we will rise!

In Its Source (v. 47-48)

⁴⁷ The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. 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.

First man, of the dust (earth)

Last man, from the heaven

We are dust, to dust we shall return. We are from heaven, to heaven we shall return.

In its Image (v. 49)

⁴⁹ Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

Now, we bear the image of clay...

Then, we bear the image of Christ...

This is totally God's amazing design. This is not some contingency plan B since we have fallen. It was all designed before creation. It was designed to reflect the greater reality of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was all a part of the redemptive unfolding of the marvelously multi-faceted wisdom of God.

We are stamped in clay. But we are being transformed into the image of Christ as we behold His face. The Spirit is pouring into our souls the very shape of Christ's holy glory. One day we will awaken in His presence. Then in full humanity we will bear the image of Christ, a glorified body.

Then, we will have risen.

Reflect and Respond

The Lord Jesus is the source of spiritual life to Christian believers (v. 45)—what the Bible calls ‘eternal life’.

So complete is Jesus’ defeat of sin and death for Christians, we are now described as ‘of heaven’ (v. 48)

Our resurrection bodies will be related to our physical bodies but different from them (vv. 35–50). They will be bodies suitable for the eternal kingdom of God (v. 51) for that is their destiny.

The resurrection is possible:

Because of the power of God that raised Jesus from the dead;

Because of the life of Jesus regenerating us through the giving of the Holy Spirit.

The resurrection transforms us from bodies that are:

Perishable to imperishable

Humiliation to glory

Weakness to power

Natural to spiritual

Natural, we are now people of earth, stamped with the image of clay.

Spiritual, we will then be people of heaven, stamped with image of Christ.