

# THE NATURE OF THE RESURRECTION BODY

---

1 Corinthians 15:35-58

## Introduction:

What will heaven be like? What will we be like when we get to heaven? What happens when we die? Those are questions that we often ask but have very few answers to.

When Jesus spoke to Martha after the death of her brother, Lazarus, he said to her, *“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”* (John 11:25-26 ESV)

That was the promise of resurrection. “...though he die, yet shall he live...” That is the hope of the believer—that even though we die physically, our spirit lives on, and one day our bodies will be raised to live forever in the eternal state.

We have been working our way through the book of 1 Corinthians and the past few messages have been from the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of this epistle which was written by the Apostle Paul to the church in Corinth. In the first part of this chapter, Paul spoke about the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the foundation of the gospel message that brings hope to the believer. And the heart of it all is the grace of God—see v. 10—everything we are and everything we do is only by God’s grace.

In verses 12-19 Paul addressed the concern that some of the believers in Corinth, who had come out of the Greek pagan way of thinking, were convinced that there was no possibility of a bodily resurrection—dead men don’t live again. If there is no resurrection, then you cannot say that Christ is risen, and if Christ is not risen the implications are not only frightening but leave us without hope – see v. 19.

But the good news is that Christ has been raised from the dead. Two weeks ago, on Easter Sunday we looked at that glorious truth as we examined verses 20-34. In that message we noted three specific assurances that come to us because of Christ’s resurrection:

1. It assures us of our resurrection – Christ is the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep – there is a whole harvest yet to come.
2. It assures us that Christ has defeated every enemy, including death – see vv. 25-26.
3. It assures us that Christ is the ultimate victor – King of kings and Lord of lords – vv. 27a, 28.

The glory of the resurrection truth is that it changes everything for us who believe, and it affects the way we live our lives here and now. In vv. 30-32 Paul spoke of his willingness to risk everything, even his very life, for the sake of the gospel because of the hope of the resurrection. And it ought to be so in our lives. The truth of the resurrection and the hope it brings, changes the way we live today.

Well, that brings us to our text this morning. In the remainder of this chapter, Paul goes on to further explain the concept of resurrection and what it means for us. I am dividing vv. 35-58 into two sections and I am just going to use the headings that are given in the ESV Bible...

## The Resurrection Body vv. 35-49

Here Paul’s focus is not on the resurrection of Jesus, but rather our resurrection. What will that be like? What will our resurrection body be like? How can such a thing even be? Paul asks some of those very questions in v. 35 – *read it*. Then he proceeds to answer the question, beginning with several illustrations taken from nature.

1. A picture from the plant world – *read vv. 36-38*. Paul is showing even from the world of nature that there is a change when something dies and comes back to life again. As the ESV Study Bible points out, God will change the bodies of those who have died to make them suitable for their new imperishable existence. *Explain briefly* – seed that dies → plant that grows.
2. A picture from the animal world – *read v. 39*. There are different kinds of bodies – different kinds of flesh. Human, animals, birds, fish. Not all bodies are the same. So also, the bodies we have now are not the same as the bodies we will have in the resurrection.
3. A picture from the larger universe – *read vv. 40-41, comment briefly*. There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies that differ.

In vv. 42-49, Paul emphasizes the contrast between our present corruptible bodies and our future immortal bodies. There is a great difference between what we are now and what we will be in eternity:

Perishable → imperishable – today, our bodies are subject to sickness, disease, aches and pains, and ultimately death. Ever since the disobedience of Adam brought death into the world, the human body has suffered under the curse.

Dishonor → glory – could refer to the physical appearance, or he could also be referring to the shame that comes because of sin. Think of the response of Adam and Eve when they realized they were naked. Their shame led them to try to cover themselves in order to hide from God and from each other. We have been covering and hiding ever since. But in eternity we will no longer have to deal with that shame and guilt.

Weakness → power – no longer will our bodies be subject to the frailty of temptation and sin. We will live in perfect power and victory.

Natural → spiritual – we will not be limited to the time-space continuum that controls us today. Remember, when Jesus rose with his new and glorified body, how he was able to simply appear in the room, when the doors were locked.

So, with these statements of contrast, Paul tells us, in a few brief sentences, that in the resurrection our bodies will no longer be subject to sickness and death, to shame and guilt, to temptation and sin, or to time and space limitations.

In vv. 45-49, Paul outlines the contrast between Adam and Christ. Adam was the first man, a natural man, who received natural life when God breathed life into him. Everyone born of Adam since that time has that same natural life, but because of sin we are subject to death. Adam was a man of the earth, a man of dust.

In contrast to that, Jesus Christ, whom Paul refers to as the last Adam, was the source of life. He is not of this earth but is from heaven. He is a spiritual man. In v. 49 he draws this whole section to a conclusion by showing our connection to both the first Adam and the last Adam. We are like Adam in that we are of the earth, but in the resurrection, we will be like Christ, a spiritual being with a spiritual body.

There is certainly much more that could be said from those verses, but I am going to leave it for now, because I want to wrap this up by looking at vv. 50-58, a brief passage where Paul points our thoughts to...

## Mystery and Victory vv. 50-58

*Read v. 50* – this is the reason that resurrection is so important. The body you and I inhabit today could never exist in heaven. Our bodies are of this earth, and they were meant for this earth. They are mortal, perishable, subject to sickness, death and decay.

But the good news is that the resurrection changes everything. But it is not just the resurrection that matters, but the change that takes place at the resurrection that makes the difference. Let's read vv. 51-57 – *read them*.

There are several important thoughts in those verses:

- Without a resurrected or glorified body, we could never inherit the kingdom of God. We would be left with no hope of heaven or eternal life – v. 50.
- Whether we have already died or are still alive when the trumpet sounds at the rapture, it does not matter. We will be instantly changed—our bodies will be made glorious, imperishable, immortal, no longer subject to the decay of this world – vv. 51-53.
- Death, with its power, will be completely and forever defeated. Victory will be complete – vv. 54-57.

What a glorious day that will be, when death is finally defeated, and we are changed and receive our new eternal, glorified bodies. The songwriter, Jim Hill, said it well when he wrote;

There is coming a day  
When no heartaches shall come  
No more clouds in the sky,  
No more tears to dim the eye  
All is peace forever more  
On that happy golden shore  
What a day, glorious day that will be.

There will be no sorrow there  
No more burdens to bear  
No more sickness, no pain,  
no more parting over there  
And forever I will be  
With the One who died for me  
What a day, glorious day that will be.

What a day that will be  
When my Jesus I shall see  
When I look upon His face, the One who saved me by His grace  
When He takes me by the hand And leads me thru the Promise Land  
What a day, glorious day that will be.

## Conclusion

So how do we apply this glorious truth to our lives today? It is wonderful to anticipate what it will be like when we receive that glorious, new, immortal body. But how does that impact us in the here and now?

Well, I think Paul does a great job of applying it for us in v. 58 – *read it*. Therefore... because of the hope we have, the knowledge of a glorious future, where there will be no suffering or pain, where death has been forever defeated, and we will be with our Lord forever, we live now in joyful service. We are called to serve our Lord faithfully, knowing that there is a future, there is a hope, that what we are doing has eternal value.

When we live with the realization that there is an eternal future, that our work and activity in this life has eternal consequences, it gives meaning and significance to what we do here and now.

Do you have that hope in your life? Are you living out the days of your life with the realization that what you do now has eternal significance? We cannot afford to be complacent in our service for the Lord. Listen once again to Paul's admonition... *read v. 58 again*.