

Text: 1 Corinthians 15:35-49

Title: A Body Included: Resurrection, Part 7

Truth: The work of Christ encompasses our resurrection.

Date/Location: Sunday March 28, 2021 and February 28, 2019 at FBC

Introduction

There are several very serious problems in the Corinthian church.

There were divisions, immorality, lawsuits, problems about marriage, pride, misunderstanding about giving, and misuse of spiritual gifts, and even denial of the Christian teaching about resurrection.

Notice how Paul addresses them directly throughout the letter. This is a model for us. When there is a problem, address it directly. Any other means, like a round-about approach, could be mistaken by the one who most clearly needs to understand. Christians place a high value on clear, direct communication because it is most truthful and most helpful.

I. The Denial of the Resurrection, via Mocking Questions

- A. For example, in 15:12 he says, “How do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?” He confronts them head-on with their error. They are denying the resurrection even though Paul had proclaimed to them that Christ was raised from the dead, and *that* was central to the entire point of Christianity.
- B. The resurrection-deniers do not give up easily, as indicated by the questions they ask (recorded in v. 35). There are at least two ways to ask a question. One is to sincerely want to know new information. That is not the case here. Just a tip for you about reading your Bible: you may read this question with an honest mind, wanting to know more about what the resurrection body looks like. But if you impute your honest mindset to the questioner, you will miss something of the situation that Paul is facing. It is good that you read the question honestly, but that is not how Paul intended you to understand the situation.
- C. The other way to ask a question is rhetorically or sarcastically, that is, to make a point. Here, the point is that the false teachers are

making a mockery of the Christian view. The opponents say, in effect: “OK Paul, though we don’t believe in the resurrection, we’ll run with it for a minute. So just how are the dead raised up?” You can almost hear the whiny mockery in the question. They continue, “What body will the dead get?” They think that it is so ridiculous that people would be raised from the dead that they ask “how” and “what” questions to challenge Paul’s teaching.

We know this is a mocking question by Paul’s opponents because Paul addresses them in verse 36 as foolish. That is not something you would call a person who genuinely does not know the answer to the question.

II. The Truth of the Resurrection Body, via Illustration

A. Paul takes the opportunity to express truth about the resurrection body. First, he assumes that the resurrection is true. He has demonstrated that already. He does not answer the “how” question in any detail. It is a miracle of God. He focuses on the second question, the nature of the resurrection body.

B. Illustrations from Nature, v. 36-41

1. The old body is likened to a grain or other seed. The resurrection body is like a plant or fruit, different from the seed but arising out of it and connected organically to it.
2. The resurrection body has its own type of “flesh,” just like there are differences among men and animals and birds. The new body has some kind of material aspect to it.
3. The resurrection body is its own unique kind of thing, and has its own unique glory. This is in just the same way that there are different types of heavenly and earthly bodies, the sun, the moon, and the stars. Each has its own “glory,” which means each has its own unique majesty or honor. Its type is different, meaning its appearance is different, meaning its glow (light) is different. They are in a sense in classes to themselves so we do not compare them to each other.

All of these are intended to point out that the resurrection body is in its own unique category. It is something that we have not

seen. It is like when you go to a zoo and you see an animal entirely different than one you have seen before. You marvel at it, but it makes sense because of the diversity of God’s creation that you have already seen. You begin to note similarities and differences between it and other things you know. You will recognize the resurrection body as perfectly sensible, and its features will match precisely the demands of its environment. Its glory will be unique to it.

C. Verse 42 draws out the main point. “So also is the resurrection of the dead.” It is like the illustrations. Like a seed changes form, and each “thing” has its own type of flesh and glory, and each heavenly body is a different type, so is the resurrection body.

Verse	Mortal Body	Resurrection body
42	Sown in corruption.	Raised in incorruption.
43	Sown in dishonor.	Raised in glory.
43	Sown in weakness.	Raised in power.
44	Sown a natural body.	Raised a spiritual body.
44	There is a “natural” body.	There is a “spiritual” body.
45	In Adam, a living being. This is our likeness.	In Christ, a life-giving spirit. This is the believer’s future likeness.
46	First is natural.	Afterward is spiritual.
47	First man was earthy, dusty.	Second man is Lord, from heaven.
48	Like Adam, we are people of dust.	Like the heavenly man Jesus, believers are heavenly.
49	We bore the image of the man of dust.	We will bear the image of the heavenly man.

We will be conformed to the likeness of Christ. This conformity is not just in moral purity, but also includes a measure of bodily likeness (Phil. 3:21). This similarity will make us suitable for an eternal existence in the new earth and heavens.

To reiterate this point, notice that from verses 45-49, the apostle contrasts the first man/natural man/man of dust versus the last Adam/spiritual man/heavenly man—like seed to plant, from one

glory to another glory. The believer's resurrection body will be fashioned after the image of the heavenly man Jesus Christ. The bottom line is that what his resurrection body is like, ours will be like also.

- D. To those who deny the resurrection altogether, this information will not be convincing because they discard with the entire notion. But at the crux of what it means to be a Christian is to acknowledge the resurrection of Christ and to share with Paul and the faithful Jewish forefathers the hope of the resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:6, 24:15).

III. Details Left Out About the Resurrection

- A. Paul does not say exactly what the powers or glories of the new body will be. He does not say that we will be a certain age or beauty; nor does he say that we will be recognizable or not.
- B. The question about appearance comes up often. The indirect Biblical evidence is that yes, we will be recognized. The disciples somehow knew Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration. The disciples could recognize Jesus, though with difficulty. I liken that difficulty to what it is like to see someone that you were peripherally connected with 20 or more years ago. If your memory is not super great, and/or the person has changed in their appearance somewhat, then it can be difficult to recognize them—but not impossible. Of course, the differences may be greater than my illustration can convey. For example, when you consciously knew your grandma, she might have been already 65 years old or more. If you encounter her in heaven, she will not look worn by the years as she may have then.
- C. Will the body be material? In other words, will it be physical and have flesh? It must be. Why? Our bodies will be like Jesus' body is now (Phil. 3:21), and his glorified body *was* material or "physical." (Platonic dualism is popular among humans, but not God!) How do we know? Luke 24:39 says, "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have." In verse 43, Jesus ate the food that they gave Him. He invited Thomas to touch Him (John 20:27). Despite

some supernatural characteristics, our future bodies will have physicality to them.

1. Banish the notion from your mind that you will be a disembodied spirit in heaven forever, or that you have to be disembodied to escape sin and be holy. That is not what “spiritual” means. Spiritual means “full of the Holy Spirit; holy; godly.” It does not mean “non physical.”
2. You would also do well to put that thought far from you because it may cause you to think that your fleshly body, your physicality, is what causes you all your sin problems today. It does not. It did not cause sin in Adam or Eve. It did not cause sin for Christ—and they had exactly the same kind of body that you have.

It is not that we reside in unredeemed flesh. You are redeemed—all of yourself—if saved. Yet, you have a built-in tendency toward sin. Whatever you call this—a sinful nature, a tendency, or whatever, it resides in part of you that is deeper than your flesh. How do we know? Jesus said in Matthew 15:19 that out of the heart comes evil thoughts, immorality, lying, etc. He is not talking about physical flesh. He is talking about the heart—the innermost part of man.

3. The idea that flesh is the problem is basic to Gnosticism. We do not believe in that philosophical duality of matter/spirit that divides the two and improperly locates sin in the body.

Conclusion

The Holy Spirit will raise our bodies (Romans 8:11). We live a life now in the initial likeness of his resurrection (Romans 6:5), but we shall live a life in total likeness to it later.

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