

Our Resurrection Bodies

1 Corinthians 15:35-49

Pastor John Miller

I want to start by reading just verse 35. It's an introductory verse.

Paul says, "But someone will say, 'How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?'"

Paul has made it very clear that because of Christ's death, burial and resurrection from the dead, our bodies one day will rise also. You cannot separate the death and resurrection of Christ from the resurrection of the believer. Because Christ rose, our bodies will rise also. This truth Paul defended historically, logically, theologically and practically.

Yet, when it comes to the subject of the resurrection and our bodies—and everything we cover today is all about the body in its resurrection—how will God raise us from the dead? What body will we come out of the grave with? What will our body be like in heaven? What will we be like in eternity? When it comes to those issues, we also have many questions like what happens when an infant or a child dies. What kind of body will they have when they go to heaven? What about those who die a violent death? Maybe burned in a fire or their bodies are incinerated in an automobile accident? What about those who die at sea? What about those who have fallen overboard and drowned at sea? What if they were eaten by a shark? Do you think God has a problem with the resurrection of their bodies? What about cremation? I get asked that question a lot. Will that affect the future resurrection of the body? If the body has been cremated, can God still raise those from the dead?

Notice the questions that are asked in verse 35. "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?" These two questions form the basis for this section in 1 Corinthians 15. Paul will not focus on the first question but will focus more on the second question of what kind of body we will have. So there is the "how" and there is the "what"; how will He raise us up, and what kind of body will we have? These are very important questions.

But Paul is expecting that these questions are coming from a critic. As he asks these questions in verse 35, they are kind of hypothetical, and they are probably from a critic who was asking them sarcastically and with a snide voice. The reason for that was because these believers in Corinth were Greeks, and they were being influenced by Greek culture. They didn't believe that their physical bodies would come out of the grave, would be transformed and be given new, glorified bodies in heaven. They believed that Jesus' body rose from the dead, but they didn't believe their bodies would rise from the dead. This was Greek philosophy; it wasn't based on the Scriptures.

We need to be careful as Christians that what we believe comes not from the culture around us but from the Word of God. We're not to buy the culture's view; we're to form what we believe from a Biblical view or standpoint.

So the problem was that some of the Corinthians were saying that the body does not rise from the dead. We saw that in verse 12.

At this point, Paul moves from the necessity of bodily resurrection to the nature of the resurrection of the body. He moves from the resurrection being necessary to the resurrection's nature, or how God is going to raise our bodies from the dead.

Let me give you four facts about the resurrection of our bodies. This is very specific, not general. It ties in with so much about what the Bible teaches about the afterlife in heaven. Number one, it will be related to our natural bodies. We see it in verses 36-38. Paul says, "Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be when but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain." So when you plant a seed in the ground, a seed doesn't come up, but a body that God gives it. "But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body." So God is the one acting here, doing the miracle. Paul is using the analogy of planting a seed. When you plant a seed, the seed doesn't come up, but a plant comes up.

I've always chuckled a bit at the beginning of verse 36 where Paul replies to the statement, "Some of you are going to ask the question, 'How are the dead raised up? With what body do they come?'" The first two words of his reply are "Foolish one" or "You foolish man."

You've heard it said that there are no dumb questions. I disagree. There are dumb questions. I've heard a lot of dumb questions. But don't be afraid to ask me a question. I won't tell you it's dumb. I'll just try to answer it, whether it's dumb or not.

But when Paul says, "Foolish one," he's not actually saying the person was moronic or he doesn't have intelligence. He's just saying, "It's silly to think that way," because why would they think it incredible that God would raise the dead. Notice it says that "God gives it a body."

I love it when Paul the apostle in the book of Acts was standing before King Agrippa's court and was preaching the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. They began to mock Paul. Again, it was the influence of the Greek culture, so they mocked the fact that our bodies would be resurrected and that we would live beyond the grave. Paul, with great confidence and boldness, asked in Acts 26:8, "Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?" Good question.

The Bible says that "With God, all things are possible." "Is anything too hard for God?" So if you fall overboard and get eaten by a shark, does God go, "Oh, no! What a bummer! Gabriel, Michael, what are we going to do?" Do you think God is freakin' out? If you get cremated, does God say, "Oh, why did you do that? You messed it up!"? It's not a problem for God. God is omnipotent. It means that He is all powerful; there is no limitation to His power. So the answer to the first question of "How are the dead raised up?" is "God." God raises them up. God can do all things. There are no problems for God.

So Paul first uses the analogy of seed, because the foolishness of Paul's critics was caused by

their failure to observe some underlying principles in nature. Do you know that you can learn some spiritual truths from nature? You can look at the created world around us and learn spiritual truths. The Bible says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork."

There are three things that nature teaches us. It teaches us that living plants come out of the death of the seed. That what Paul says in verse 36: "Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies." He is using an analogy of a farmer sowing seed. What you put in the ground first has to die in order for new life to come forth. Jesus said it like this in John 12:24 when speaking of His own death and the fruit that it would bring: "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat..."—there's the same imagery, an allegory—"...falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain." Jesus was referring to His death, resurrection and the salvation of souls, but the imagery was still the same there; a seed goes into the ground and dies, and it brings forth much fruit. Death is not an obstacle to resurrection of the body; it is essential for it. You have to die in order to be resurrected. Death is not a problem for God.

The second thing that nature teaches us is that what comes out of the ground differs from what goes into the ground. This is my favorite. You put seeds in the ground, but seeds don't come up. When you put wheat in the ground, wheat comes up. When you put corn in the ground, corn comes up. If you plant pumpkins, you don't get an apple tree. What you sow is what you reap. But what we sow is not in the same form as what comes up. There is unity but there is also difference.

Verse 37 shows an illustration of this. "And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain." You put the seed in the ground, but a different form than the form of a seed comes up. Someone's going to put your body in the ground, you're going to be cremated, you're going to die at sea, or whatever, but a new, glorious body is going to be resurrected.

This is one of the great illustrations in the text of a farmer sowing wheat, barley or grain. But I love the illustration of an acorn and an oak tree. If you just looked at an acorn and didn't realize that a mighty oak tree came from that tiny acorn, you would never believe it. So the next time you're wondering what kind of body you're going to have in heaven, find an oak tree, go under it and find an acorn and then look up into the branches of the tree and realize that God is going to give you an all-new, all-different, all-designed body. You plant a seed, but what comes up from that seed is all-together different than that seed.

Another of my favorite illustrations is a tulip bulb and a tulip flower. A tulip bulb is not very attractive; you wouldn't actually have a bouquet of tulip bulbs on your table. But out of this gnarly, ugly, homely bulb comes a beautiful tulip. So that's a picture from nature how we are planted in the ground, and then out of the ground comes our new, glorified, resurrection bodies.

F. B. Meyers said, "The golden head of wheat is fairer than the little, brown seed cast into the

furrow.”

One of my favorite quotes is from Joni Eareckson Tada. She wrote a book titled *Heaven, Your Real Home*. When that book was first written, I wanted to read it, because I wanted to know what she had to say. She is a quadriplegic. As a result of a diving accident when she was a teenager, she lost movement in her body from her shoulders down. If anyone is looking for a new body, it's Joni Eareckson Tada.

She wrote in her book, “Trying to understand what our bodies will be like in heaven is much like expecting an acorn to understand the destiny of its roots, bark, branches and leaves. Or asking a caterpillar to appreciate flying. Or a peach pit to fathom being fragrant. Or a coconut to grasp what it means to sway in the ocean breeze. Our eternal bodies will be so grand, so glorious that we can only catch a fleeting glimpse.” How true that is. We can barely fathom the idea that out of this humble, lowly body will come this new, glorified body that will be fit for heaven for all eternity.

Notice the third thing that nature teaches us is in verse 38. It teaches us that there is a continuation from the seed to the plant. So number one, the seed dies, and then new life springs forth. Number two, what comes forth from the seed differs from the seed that was put in the ground. Number three, there is a continuation from the seed to the plant. Verse 38 says, “But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body.” So verse 35, “With what body do they come?” The answer is in verse 38: It's the body that God gives them as He pleases. So what you sow is what you reap. God will give us a new, glorious body. What a wonderful truth that is.

When Jesus rose from the dead, the angels told them, “This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.” So the same body that is laid in the grave is going to be resurrected; it's continuing on, but it's transformed.

The second fact about our resurrection bodies is that they will be consistent with the principles of creation, verses 39-41. “All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.” Some translations say “heavenly bodies” and “earthly bodies.” Verse 41, “There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory.” Notice that verse 39 says there are differences in flesh.

Paul first uses the analogy of seeds, and now he uses the analogy of physical flesh. There is the flesh of men, of animals, of fish and of birds. There are different kinds of flesh. If you go to a restaurant and order a steak but they bring you salmon, you say, “This isn't steak; it's fish.” We know that scientifically; scientists can study the composition of a body and know whether it is man or animal. We know that God gives each being his own particular body. So the point is that God creates different kinds of flesh, and all produce after their own kind.

Notice secondly, in verse 40, that there are different kinds of bodies. There are celestial or heavenly bodies, and there are terrestrial or earthly bodies. Here we can't be absolutely certain what Paul is referring to when he says bodies in heaven and bodies on the earth. It seems that in the context, as he goes on to talk about the sun, moon and stars, he is talking about those bodies and the planets. Those are heavenly bodies. The earthly bodies are the animals and the human beings that are on the earth. The point is that there are different kinds of flesh and different kinds of bodies.

Notice that in verses 40-41, the bodies differ in glory. Paul says, "But the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun..."—that's pretty glorious and amazing—"...another glory of the moon..."—when the moon is full, the glory it radiates is beautiful—"...and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory." Paul was writing this long before the scientific age, but he understood that stars differ; they differ in their size, heat and color. If you look at the stars through a telescope, you can see that they have different colors and hues. What a glorious truth that is. So he is basically saying that God gives each entity their own body, as it pleases Him.

Paul's point is that the new resurrection body we will have is going to be different than the body we have on earth. The acorn is vastly different from an oak tree, or a caterpillar from a butterfly. Try to convince a caterpillar that it will have wings and fly. But it will spin a cocoon and come out as a beautiful butterfly. We'll be buried in the ground, but we'll come out with a glorious body. So the bodies we have in heaven will be different than the bodies we have on earth. Our heavenly bodies will have their own, unique glory.

In Psalm 16:11, the psalmist says, "In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore." Do you know that heaven's going to be awesome? I've met people who say, "I don't want to go to heaven. Just sitting on a cloud, playing a harp, flapping my wings. It's not going to be fun. It looks boring." How stupid is that? Heaven will be amazing: the sights, the sounds, the colors, the joys. The joy that you have now will be eclipsed by the joy you'll have in heaven. The reunions, the fellowship when you see your loved ones who have died and gone before you will be awesome. You'll need new bodies to be able to handle the joy and pleasures that are in heaven.

In heaven we will have actual bodies. In heaven we'll have what's called the Last Supper of the Lamb. The Scriptures indicate that we eat in heaven, but it indicates that we don't need to eat. The cool thing is that we can eat and not gain weight. Praise God! So we can enjoy eating. That's awesome. You can eat whatever you want and won't gain weight. It'll just be forever blissful. It'll be amazing! All the joys of heaven will be so much greater than we see from an acorn to an oak tree, a tulip bulb to a tulip or a caterpillar to a butterfly. What a glorious prospect we have.

The third fact about our resurrection bodies is in verse 42-44. It is that our resurrection body will be a spiritual body. This is so important for us to understand. Paul says, "So also..." There are two conclusions in this text. The first one is in verse 42—"so also"—and the second one is

in verse 45—"and so." They are key phrases. Verse 42 says, "So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption..."—that's our perishable, earthly bodies—"...it is raised in incorruption." It is imperishable. "It is sown in dishonor..."—or "planted in the ground"—"...it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness..."—I'll say amen to that—"...it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body..."—which is decaying, corruptible, dishonoring, weak and lacks power—"...and there is a spiritual body." What a glorious truth that is.

What Paul now does is he moves from allegory from nature to contrast. The contrasts are fourfold between our present bodies and our future bodies. The first contrast is between corruption and incorruption. Verse 42 says, "The body is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption." Our earthly bodies are corruptible, but our heavenly bodies are incorruptible. The word "corruptible" means "perishable." The word "incorruptible" means "imperishable."

Why are our earthly bodies corruptible or perishable? The answer is because of sin. When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden, it brought sin and death on the entire human race. Sin, sickness, disease and death all come from man's sin. All the calamities, all the disasters, all the horrors of this world come because man sinned, and the curse came upon the earth. So we're fallen. But Jesus came to reverse the curse and to redeem man back to God.

Not only are our bodies going to be redeemed, but the entire earth is also going to be restored to its original—even better than the Garden of Eden. Then we'll spend eternity with God.

A footnote to this is that there are some in the church today who like to think that we, in our bodies right now, can have perfect health. These people believe that since we are born again and are redeemed, that there is carte blanc healing in the atonement. I've told you before that salvation has three tenses: past, present and future. Every Christian has been saved—past tense. It's called "justification"; you've been declared righteous. The present tense of your salvation is that you are being saved; that's your holy living. Day by day you are being changed to be more like Jesus. You're not sinless, but you should sin less and less as you walk with God. That's called "sanctification." The third phase of your salvation, which has not happened yet, is called "glorification." That happens when you go to heaven and you are with the Lord. So you die, you go to heaven and then your resurrected body is reunited with your soul and spirit and you have a glorified body. So you've been justified, you're being sanctified and one day you will be glorified.

You're all pretty good looking right now, but I don't see anyone glorified yet. I know you think you're awesome, but you're not quite there yet. You don't believe that you're not yet glorified? Go home and look in the mirror. Better yet, go to your 40th high-school reunion. You'll understand that "The wages of sin is death." I remember at my 25th, someone came up to me and said, "Hey, John!" I thought, Do I know you? Who is this? I had to look at his name tag. I thought, "Whoa, dude! You got a new body, but it ain't a good one!" I remember the guys who partied and drank and smoked who I saw at the reunion. I thought, "Whoa, are you messed up! You need help." I'm so glad I got saved right out of high school. The Lord changed my life.

To walk with the Lord has physical benefits.

All you have to do is stick around and live a little longer and you realize that your body isn't as good as you thought it was. It's going downhill, or you're already over the hill. The text calls it "corruption."

God has never guaranteed that we won't have sickness, disease or weaknesses. Sickness and disease even come to believers, because our bodies have not yet been redeemed.

The second contrast in verse 43 is between dishonor and glory. "It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory." Our earthly bodies are bodies of dishonor. There is not a lot of honor in a corpse, the Greek seems to indicate. When a person dies, we put them in their best clothes and put makeup on them, comb their hair and put them in a nice casket. But they're still a corpse. It's a good-looking corpse, but it's still a corpse. There's nothing honorable about that; it's very dishonoring as your body deteriorates. We've all seen people we love grow weak and see their body functions not work. How heart breaking that is. The body brings dishonor resulting in death.

But the resurrection body is glorious. I love that. Romans 8:18 says, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." The resurrection body is going to be glorious. When we are in heaven, there will be no night; it will be all day. Our bodies will literally radiate the glory of God.

A little taste of that—but you can't make a full analogy—was when Jesus was transfigured on the mountain, and James, John and Peter saw His body shine brightly and gloriously. That's how we are going to be in heaven. We're going to have glorified bodies. It's going to be amazing.

The third contrast in verse 43 is between weakness and power. "It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power." There are so many limitations to our natural, earthly bodies. First they grow stronger, and then they grow weaker. They say that at age 25 you peak, and then from 25 on, you're headed downhill. I've been headed downhill a long time. The faster you go down the hill, the faster you go.

But in our new bodies there is power. What a contrast! There'll be no weakness in heaven. There'll be no fatigue in heaven. We're not going to sleep in heaven. There'll be no naps in heaven. We aren't going to be around the throne worshipping God and saying, "Oh, I have to go take my nap. I'm sorry." There will be no night there. It'll be awesome. It'll be eternal day and bliss. There will be no sin or suffering or sorrow or tears; all the former things will pass away.

The fourth and final contrast is between a natural body and a spiritual body, verse 44. The natural body, literally a soulish body, means suited for the earth. Your bodies right now are suited for the earth. You have the thirst drive, the air drive and the sex drive. God designed our bodies to work on earth.

You hear on the news that people can be sent into outer space to spend time at the space station. It's only \$58 million to go on this trip. But when you go into outer space, you can't just go walking around. You have to have a space suit on to be able to breathe air. God has given us our suit for living on the earth, to be able to breathe the air, drink water, eat food and reproduce. We have a natural body. We read that this natural body is sown in dishonor and weakness. Being a natural body, it is corruptible.

But in heaven, we will have a spiritual body. But this doesn't compute to us, because when we think of the word "spiritual," we think of immaterial or nonphysical. That's not what our text conveys. Our heavenly bodies will be physical or material; we'll have a corporal body. When you get to heaven and see your loved ones and reach out to hug them, your arms won't go right through them. They'll have a new and improved spiritual, physical body.

How does this heavenly body differ from our natural body? It will be fitted, equipped and designed for eternity in heaven. So our natural body is fitted for earth, and our new body will be a spiritual body. It will be able to live forever; it won't be temporal or corruptible. It will be able to handle the glory, splendor and majesty. We'll be able to look at God.

In this physical body, you can't go to heaven and look on God. You would be destroyed. So God gives you a new body in heaven like a space suit so you can live in that atmosphere and so you can see God. What a glorious truth that is. So your spiritual body is not immaterial; it's spiritually suited and equipped for eternity in heaven.

I love what Charles Haddon Spurgeon said about this. He said,

"The righteous are put into the grave all weary and worn, but such they shall not arise. They go there with furrowed brow and hollowed cheek and withered skin, but they shall wake up in beauty and glory. The old man taut and thinner, leaning on his staff. The paralyzed come there trembling all the way. The halt, the lame, the withered, the blind journey in doleful pilgrimage to this common dormitory, but they shall not rise decrepit, deformed or diseased. But strong, vigorous, active, glorious, immortal. The winter of the grave shall soon give way to the spring of the resurrection and the summer of glory. Blessed is death, since it answers all the ends of medicine to this mortal frame. And through the divine power disrobes us of the leprous rags of flesh to clothe us in the wedding garments of incorruption."

How beautiful is that picture. Whenever you lay a Christian loved one who dies in the grave, you have that hope. Whenever a believer dies in their physical body, they will be resurrected in a grand, new, glorious body.

In 2 Corinthians 5, you read that our bodies are likened unto tents. A tent is not a permanent dwelling place; it's frail, fragile and temporary. No one wants to live permanently in a tent. You want to move out of that tent. So our bodies were never intended to be permanent dwellings. We one day will move out of this body, and we will move into a new body that is eternal in the heavens.

There is one last fact about the resurrection body I want to point out in our text, verses 45-49. It's the Scriptural argument that our resurrected body will be like Christ's resurrected body. So the best explanation to the question, "What will our bodies be like in heaven?" is to look at the resurrected body of Jesus Christ. Everything we can learn about our future bodies can be seen in the resurrected body of Jesus Christ. Paul says, "And so..."—here's the summary—"...it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living being.' The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust..."—referring to Adam—"...the second Man is the Lord from heaven," referring to Jesus. "As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man."

Now Paul does something he does at other places in the Bible. He points out the important truth that Adam, acting as a federal head, brought sin and death upon the entire human race. Jesus is the last Adam, also a federal head, who brought life and forgiveness upon the entire human race. So if you are only in Adam by your first birth, you only have a physical body and haven't been born again, you will die and perish. But if you have been born again in Christ by faith and salvation, you will have the hope of eternal life.

A little footnote to verse 45 is that there really was a man named Adam, as described in Genesis 2. God created the first man, Adam. He didn't evolve from an animal over billions of years. Remember that there are different kinds of flesh: the flesh of man and of animals. God made man in His image and in His likeness. God made this first Adam out of dirt and then breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. But he was suited for this world. Then man sinned and fell and brought sin and death upon the whole human race.

Jesus is called "the last Adam," verse 45. He is not the second Adam, giving place to the second and third and fourth and a fifth. There is no other; Jesus is the only Savior. So Jesus is the last Adam. You have the first Adam and the last Adam. All of humanity is in either the first Adam or the last Adam; in the first Adam, condemned, or in the last Adam, saved and has the hope of eternal life.

So Paul contrasts these two Adams. Verse 47, "The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven." At Jesus's first coming, at the Incarnation, God sent His only begotten Son into the world, into the womb of the Virgin Mary and He became a man, took on flesh in a body. He was sinless but took on flesh. He died, was buried and then conquered sin and death and rose from the dead. When He comes back in the Second Coming, this same Jesus—born of the Virgin Mary, who lived a sinless life and died a substitutionary death, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, exalted at the right hand of God the Father—will come back in power and glory. It will be a glorious happening. He will set up a new kingdom on earth, where righteousness will reign. The earth will be restored. It will be glorious. In Philippians 3:21, Paul says that when Christ returns, He "will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body."

Jesus Christ is our only hope. All humanity is either in Adam the first and under condemnation and death or is in the last Adam, Jesus Christ, who is the life-giving Spirit.

Do you know that you'll go to heaven when you die? It's one thing to come to church and listen to this sermon, but it's another thing to take it to heart. So many times people are listening but not really listening. "It is appointed for men to die once, but after this, the judgment." The Bible says that two things are certain. Number one, life is short. The Bible teaches the brevity of life. Life is like a vapor of smoke that appears for a moment and then vanishes. Number two, death is universal. "What man can live and not see death? Can he deliver his life from the power of the grave?" Life is short and death is certain.

Where will you spend eternity? Will you have this glorious resurrected body and spend eternity in heaven? You say, "Well, what do I need to do? You need to admit that you are a sinner. The Bible says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." The Bible says, "There is none righteous; no, not one." And you need to realize that Jesus died on the Cross for your sins. He paid for your sins; He took your place. Then Jesus was buried and rose from the dead and ascended into heaven.

The Bible says, "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." So today say, "Jesus, I want my sins forgiven, I want to become your child, I want You to come into my heart and forgive my sins. I want to know that when I die, I'll go to heaven." If today you don't have that assurance, I want to give you that opportunity. Don't pass this up without having that assurance.

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." The only way for you to have the hope of heaven, hope beyond the grave, is in Jesus Christ. But you must open your heart to Him now.

Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer.