

1 CORINTHIANS 15.35-58

The Resurrection (3)

Intro: Having established the centrality of Christ's resurrection to the gospel message (vss. 1-11) and that Christ's resurrection stands or falls with the believer's resurrection (vss. 12-34), Paul turns his attention to the objections the Corinthians had to the resurrection. As we've previously noted most Greeks had no problem with the immortality of the soul, but in their thinking there was no future for the body. In this passage, not only does Paul insist that there is a future for the body, he shows that it is a glorious one! "Paul's insistence on bodily life should not be overlooked. Those who held to the immortality of the soul, but denied the resurrection of the body, usually looked for nothing more than a shadowy, insipid existence in Hades. It is fundamental to Paul's thought that the after-life will be infinitely more glorious than this one. This necessitates a suitable 'body' with which the life is to be lived, for without a 'body' of some kind there seems no way of allowing for individuality and self-expression. But Paul does not view this 'body' crudely. He describes it with the adjective 'spiritual' (v. 44), and he expressly differentiates it from 'flesh and blood' (v. 50)." (Leon Morris)

VSS. 35-41, TWO QUESTIONS: HOW & WHAT?

1. Vs. 35 shows that the Corinthians had two questions regarding the body's resurrection: 1) how are the dead raised and 2) with what kind of body?
 - » "It was clear to these Greek skeptics that a body quickly decomposes, and they thought to laugh the idea of resurrection out of court with their query about the body. What kind of body would arise from a heap of decomposed rubbish?" (Leon Morris)
 - » Note that in responding Paul refers to them as "fools". Recall that Jesus said the same thing of the Sadducees in Matt. 22:29.
2. Question of "how" is answered in vs. 38: God does it!
3. Question of "what kind of body" is covered in the rest of the passage.
 - » "Far from the decomposition of the body presenting an obstacle to the resurrection, it merely prepares us for the truth that the body that is raised is much more wonderful than the body that is buried. Plant life is always on hand to teach us. We sow nothing more than just a seed, whether it be corn or anything else; this is common to all seeds. At sowing there is no indication of the plant with its stem and leaves and flowers. But they come." (Leon Morris)
 - » "Do you have the same body that you had as a baby, or is it different? Every particle that was in your body at birth has been displaced, yet it is the same body. Your individual identity has been preserved despite the dramatic changes that have occurred in your body. In a similar way, our individual identity will be preserved in the resurrection, though our bodies will undergo dramatic alterations." (David Owen)

VSS. 42-49, BEARING THE IMAGE OF THE HEAVENLY

1. Continues discussion of “what kind of body” will be raised.
 - » Note: the same thing that is sown is raised, but in a radically different nature! (vs. 42-44)
 - » “Natural” derived from psyche. Not sarx as in vs. 50. Idea is that the body equipped for this life is buried, but the body equipped for the spiritual life is raised.
 - » Note also that Paul does not say “it is raised a spirit” but that “it is raised a spiritual body”
 - » “This does not mean a body ‘composed of spirit’, but rather ‘which expresses spirit’, ‘which answers to the needs of spirit’.” (Leon Morris)
2. Adam - Christ Contrast (vs. 45-49)
 - » Refers back to vss. 20-22 and also makes use of Genesis 2:7.
 - » “The ‘living soul’ of Genesis 2:7 is the natural body of this passage. This corresponds with the book of Genesis itself because the same construction also occurs in 1:24 to describe animals. Hence, when Moses recorded that God breathed into man’s nostrils the breath of life and he became a living soul, he was saying that the dust of the earth began to have animal life.” (Mike Willis)
 - » Perhaps it would be best to consider Christ’s resurrected body as the model for our future body. Christ’s resurrected body was different in some ways from His body before His death (consider for instance that Jesus would suddenly appear at times, see John 20:19). This “body” ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9) and apparently the same “body” with which He will return (Acts 1:11). Should we be surprised that we would be raised with the same type of “body”?
 - » “The first Adam, who became a “living psychē,” was thereby given a psychikos body at creation, a body subject to decay

and death. This Adam, who brought death into the world (vv. 21-22), thus became the representative man for all who bear his psychikos likeness. The last Adam, on the other hand, whose “spiritual (glorified) body” was given at his resurrection, not only became the representative Man for all who will bear his pneumatikos likeness, but he is himself the source of the pneumatikos life as well as the pneumatikos body.” (Gordon Fee)

- » Vs. 45: note “life-giving” is exact same phrase as “made alive” in vs. 22.
- » Vs. 47: “Paul’s sentence reads, literally: The first man of earth made of dust; The second man of heaven” (Gordon Fee) Not speaking of His incarnation body, but His resurrected body.
- » Vs. 48-49, during this life we have always born the image of Adam’s body, a body that dies. But we will also bear the image of Christ’s body, i.e. a heavenly body. See 1John 3:2; Phil. 3:21.

VSS. 50-57, THE VICTORY

1. Paul says that “flesh and blood” cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Of course they cannot, because they are corruptible. However, he does not say a body cannot, because “bodies” will inherit the kingdom of God. Our bodies will. Not flesh and blood, but changed bodies!
2. Regarding “we will not all sleep” in vs. 51, note also 2Cor 4:14; Phil 3:11 where the language shows the possibility of Paul being dead when the resurrection occurs. He did not know when it would occur.
3. With the resurrection, death is totally defeated, cf. Isaiah 25:8; Hosea 13:14.
4. Note: our victory is not complete until the resurrection. We have been delivered from sin and the law through Christ, but death is not totally defeated until the body is raised imperishable and immortal.

VS. 58, CALL TO ACTION

1. They should be “steadfast, immovable.” No

doubt Paul has their doctrine in mind, particularly what he has just written regarding the resurrection.

2. However, theology must translate into action. Proper theology would tell them that Christ was returning, and that they would be transformed into His image. If they believed that, then it mattered what they did during this life. Thus, they should abound in the work of the Lord. Their lives could be spent doing His work with the assurance that it would not be in vain!