

1 Corinthians 15:35-58

12

THE NATURE OF THE RESURRECTION



WEEK 12

The Nature of the Resurrection

Paul continues his discussion of the resurrection with two very practical questions: how will the dead be raised and what will those bodies be like (verse 35)? For those who have been around Christianity for a long time, it is easy to lose sight of what a strange doctrine this is. The resurrection of the dead was a unique idea in the ancient world, only taught by Christians and a group of Jews. For those not accustomed to the idea, it could have spooky, zombie-like connotations. So, in this section, Paul is kindly answering some very reasonable questions concerning how bodies come back to life.

Paul answers his questions in reverse order, first describing what the body will be like, and then describing how it will happen. Paul compares death and resurrection to a seed being planted. It goes into the ground in one form and comes back out in another (verses 37-41). This implies there is both continuity and discontinuity between our bodies before and after resurrection. The body before death is merely “natural,” but after the resurrection it is “spiritual.” Now, it is common for modern readers to assume natural/spiritual is the same as material/immaterial, but that is not the case. Jesus’ resurrected body was clearly material. He enjoys a meal with the disciples and seems to go out of His way to prove that He is physically present (see Luke 24:36-43). The contrast between natural and spiritual likely has more to do how we relate to God. A natural body is in some way less connected to God’s Spirit. According to theologian, Anthony Thiselton, a spiritual body is apparently a body that is fully healed and submitted to God’s Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 2:14-15).

Daily Readings

- 01 1 Corinthians 15:35-44
- 02 1 Corinthians 15:45-50
- 03 1 Corinthians 15:51-58
- 04 Hebrews 11:1-3
- 05 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
- 06 Romans 8:18-25
- 07 Philippians 3:20-21

How will this happen? Paul teaches us that all believers will be transformed at the second coming of Jesus. In verse 50, Paul says, “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God...” However, that does not mean we will not have bodies. Apparently Paul is suggesting that our bodies, as they are, cannot participate in what is coming. We must be healed and restored. This even means that those who are still alive when Christ returns will not die but will be transformed in an instant (verses 51-52). The gathering and transformation of living believers at Christ’s return is often called the rapture. Christ will transform His people, both those alive and already dead, before He ushers in His Kingdom. Our sin was defeated on the cross; on that day death will finally be defeated forever.

THE RESURRECTION BODY

But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?”³⁶ How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.³⁷ When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else.³⁸ But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body.³⁹ Not all flesh is the same: People have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another.⁴⁰ There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another.⁴¹ The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor.

⁴² So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised 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 So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.⁴⁶ The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual.⁴⁷ The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven.⁴⁸ As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the



earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven.

⁴⁹ And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.

⁵⁰ I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

⁵¹ Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— ⁵² in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

⁵⁵ “Where, O death, is your victory?
Where, O death, is your sting?”

⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁵⁸ Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

WARM UP

Do you remember when the idea of death first became a reality to you? Describe what led you to ponder the certainty of death. How did you respond and what did you learn in the days, weeks, and months to follow?

What does the hope of resurrection mean to you? What role does faith play in this hope? How do you live this out from day-to-day?

EXPLORING 1 CORINTHIANS 15:35-58

How does Paul use the illustration of the seed as it relates to death and resurrection? Does this visual illustration give you a better understanding of death and the resurrection body? Specifically note verses 42-44. Why do we find it difficult to accept the concept of resurrection when it is so clearly demonstrated in nature?

What is the relationship between Christ and Adam as mentioned in verses 45-49? Why can flesh and blood not inherit the Kingdom of God?

In verses 51-56, what is the mystery that Paul mentions? When Paul says, “the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality,” how does this affect your perspective of things yet to come?

In verses 57-58, Paul affirms that Jesus secured our victory through His death. How does verse 58 instruct the Corinthians (and us) on the proper response to His sacrifice?

APPLICATION

Make time this week to contemplate the meaning of Ephesians 3:14-19 and pastor Kent Hughes' reflections on this passage in the THINK section:

THINK

"A love which is wide enough to embrace the world.

A love which is long enough to last forever.

As Spurgeon said, "God's love is so long that your old age cannot wear it out, so long your continual tribulation cannot exhaust it, so long that your successive temptations shall not drain it dry; like eternity itself it knows no bounds."

A love which is high enough to take sinners to Heaven.

A love which is deep enough to take Christ to the very depths to reach the lowest sinner."

- Kent Hughes

PRAYER

List one or two prayer concerns to share with your group. Express gratitude to God for the hope of the resurrection.

