

**Lesson 45: “Two Resurrection Questions” 1 Corinthians 15:35-49 Craig Crawshaw****OUR TEXT**

**1 Corinthians 15:35-49** *But someone will say, “How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?”*

*You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies; and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or so something else. But God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own. All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish. There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.*

*So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.*

*So also it is written, “The first man, Adam, became a living soul.” The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.*

It appears from this early letter of Paul, that the first doctrinal heresy of the church was denying the bodily resurrection of Jesus’ followers. We call 1 Corinthians 15 the “Resurrection Chapter,” but maybe more specifically we ought call it the “Bodily Resurrection Chapter.” Paul wanted them, and us, to know that because Jesus rose bodily from the dead, we will also rise bodily from the dead, and not just be some spiritual souls floating around as disembodied spirits forever.

Remember that Paul is answering questions that he had learned from a previous letter written to him.

**1 Corinthians 7:1** *Now concerning the things about which you wrote ...*

And he mentions two of these questions in verse 35:

**1 Corinthians 15:35** *How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?*

From his response: “you fool!” we can infer that Paul realizes their question betrays error in their belief about bodily resurrection to come. Apparently they are questioning whether future resurrection makes sense, and want details. They might just as well have been asking, “How can this resurrection possibly be?,” wanting more details so as to reveal the sheer silliness of it all.

In response, Paul calls them fools for doubting the reality of bodily resurrection. And I dare say he would call us the same if we denied it. The first question: “How are the dead raised” he will answer second, beginning in verse 50, which we will consider in next week’s lesson. But the second question: “With what kind of bodies do they come?” he answers first, in today’s passage. Now Paul can’t answer with any detail, for God did not reveal that to him. But he can, and does, answer with enough revelation of God to give them and us CONFIDENCE in hope of our bodily resurrection.

Let us consider his answer in the following 4-fold revelation regarding our bodily resurrection:

1. **CONTINUITY** (v. 36-38)
2. **DISTINCTION** (v. 39-41)
3. **TRANSFORMATION** (v. 42-44)
4. **IDENTITY** (v. 45-49)

**1. CONTINUITY (v. 36-38)**

Here we learn that our bodily resurrection is not RECONSTRUCTION of what was, but a CONTINUITY of what was. In other words, God is not going to gather all the atoms of our decomposed body and somehow put them all back together the way they were. Rather, He will gather all those atoms with our DNA (which God alone could do) and make of them something that resembles our former self in continuity of our person, but is brand new.

To illustrate this, Paul uses an analogy from horticulture. First, he makes the general statement of horticultural fact: “that which you sow does not come to life unless it dies.” (v. 36). That means, a seed must “die” in the ground before life can come from that buried seed. Jesus spoke of this same truth when He was alive, teaching His disciples. He first says, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified,” (John 12:23) indicating that the following relates to Himself.

**John 12:24** *Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.*

“But does the seed really die?” you might say. Well, scientifically, the seed remains alive and bursts forth with a new life. But after a plant comes forth, you can’t dig up the root and find the seed as it was. It has transformed and no longer is a seed. So in that sense, it has died to itself. And the Jesus that was put into the tomb, never came out the same. He died literally, and He also died figuratively in that all our sin died with Him and He emerged brand new – but a CONTINUITY of who He had been, in that He was recognizable as Jesus with the nail and hand scars intact.

Paul teaches that when you sow a bare grain of wheat, for instance, it does not look like what will emerge when it sprouts. But, it does emerge as wheat – looking quite different, but still being the wheat that was put in the ground. That tells us that when you “go into the ground” in death, you will emerge as something remarkable different, but still recognizable as what you were before. **CONTINUITY!** This is a great teaching about “with what kind of body do they come?” Answer: recognizable, but remarkably different, though still the same person. This was true of Jesus’ resurrection body, and will be true of yours. In a word: **CONTINUITY!**

## 2. DISTINCTION (v. 39-41)

The second revelation about resurrected bodies that we learn in this passage is that every one will be distinct, just as our bodies are now. We Christians know that we are all being conformed to the image of Jesus, being made like Him. But this might make us think that we will all be “little Jesus” looking and acting alike, like clones. We will be like Him in sinless character, yes, praise God. But just as each snowflake is unique, and each fingerprint is unique, so each resurrected body will be unique.

To illustrate this, Paul uses three analogies.

1. FROM HORTICULTURE This one we have already seen. A bean seed will come up as a bean, and never as corn. A wheat kernel will emerge as wheat, and never as barley.
2. FROM ZOOLOGY (v. 39) Just as men, beasts, birds and fish are each distinct in their bodies, made to flourish only in the environment suitable for them, so our resurrection bodies will be distinct from all others in an environment suitable for a heavenly being
3. FROM ASTRONOMY (v. 40) Just as sun, moon and stars are each distinct in their bodies and also distinct in the glory with which they shine, so it will be with our resurrection bodies. Not only will each of us be distinct and unique in our appearance and personality, but it can be inferred that each of us will also be distinct and unique in the way that we are able to glorify our Lord. This might refer to our “reward” in heaven which will be different, or to our “proximity” to our Lord in placement (as Dante imagined), or just in our giftedness to serve the Lord.

But bottom line, each of our resurrection bodies will have DISTINCTION from another. Though conformed to Jesus in sinless character, we will apparently each have unique and distinct personalities which reflect our former distinct personalities and distinct “glory” which will be determined in heaven. Awesome !

So these are two wonderful revelations about our resurrected bodies: CONTINUITY with who we are now, and DISTINCTION from others in heaven. And now we learn of two more:

### 3. TRANSFORMATION (v. 42-44)

Here we find 4 dramatic and frankly, unimaginable transformations that our present bodies will undergo in our resurrection.

1. My perishable body becomes a IMPERISHABLE BODY
2. My body of dishonor becomes a GLORIFIED BODY
3. My weak body becomes a POWERFUL BODY
4. My natural body becomes a SPIRITUAL BODY

Wow. This is God-given revelation that should excite! My present body is under the curse of death, and I die a little each day, in disease and infirmity and aging. But God will give me a body that will be removed from the curse and will last perfectly forever.

My body of dishonor – besieged by a sin nature I inherited and choices I make to sin every day, will become a body that will not sin, but glory God in every intention and thought.

My body of weakness, able to do much, but not begin to do all that I could dream – will become powerful in ways I cannot even imagine. I may be able to circumnavigate the universe or any number of impossible tasks I could not begin to do now. Imagination soars at the thought.

My natural body of flesh and bones will become a spiritual body. I assume, like Jesus in His resurrected state, I will be able to go places immediately at will and walk through obstacles, if need be. And yet I will be able to enjoy food as he did, and other pleasures in ways I have never been able to do before. The Holy Spirit, though living in me now impeded by my natural state, will be freed to use my personality and gifts in ways I could never do here on earth. The possibilities stagger the brain.

Just as the plain, sluggish caterpillar becomes a beautiful, soaring butterfly, God will take my perishable, sinful, weak human body and transform it into an unimaginable spiritual body of endless glory and strength.

### 4. IDENTITY (v. 45-49)

We have learned that we will have a distinct and transformed body that will be in continuity with our present one. But this last revelation is mysteriously wonderful. In verses 45-49 Paul teaches that Adam was created as a living soul – meaning he was created in the image of God with unique personality and mental capability to think and reason. But the Holy Spirit was not living in him. He did not have the life-giving spirit. It was not until Jesus that the Holy Spirit was in a human. You remember that post-resurrection Jesus breathed into His disciples saying, “receive the Holy Spirit.” And that they did, just weeks later at the feast of Pentecost. And all believers have had that life-giving Spirit within them since that event.

We are “born again” to that indwelling Spirit when we receive Jesus as our Savior and Lord. And although we still resemble the first Adam as a human, we now have the new life of the Spirit as a “down payment” of what (Who) we will resemble in heaven.

***Ephesians 1:13-14a*** *In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation – having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance.*

We will resemble Jesus and bear His heavenly image. That is the reality. The mystery is, we don’t know all that means. We only know that “*we will be like Him, for we will see Him just as He is.*” (1 John 3:2) But even that has a ring of mystery to it. We know we will be sinless, but certainly not divine. Bearing His heavenly image is a wonderful, incredible truth that we will discover in full when we see Jesus face to face. But we will have an IDENTITY that is in Jesus, rather than in Adam. I can’t wait!

Next week we will see that Paul answers the first of the two questions – “How are the dead raised.” And this will be the climax to this great “Bodily Resurrection Chapter” of 1 Corinthians 15.