

March 27, 2005 PM

RESURRECTION 101 (PART 2)
1 CORINTHIANS 15:35-58

5. RESURRECTION AND THE BODY (35-49)

Context for answering these question: popular Greek philosophies of the day that understood “salvation” as escape from the body (i.e., evil matter). Resurrection of the body was laughable (cf. Act 17.16ff.)

Two questions addressed: (1) how is resurrection accomplished? and (2) what sort of body will the resurrection body be?

Death before resurrection: Paul addresses the questioner as a “fool.” Note: many Corinthians thought they were “in the know,” the spiritual elite. They had the “wisdom of this world” (i.e., the philosophies of the day). God has shown all of this to be foolish (cf. 1.20).

The death and resurrection motif is built into the creation. Paul’s discussion of “seeds,” humans, and the relationship between death and resurrection goes back to the relationships established in Genesis 1–3. (Note, e.g., fruit trees with seed and humans with seed being fruitful and multiplying.)

This is what we learn from the seed: there is death before there is resurrection, and the resurrection body, though continuous with the seed that is planted, is not the same thing as the seed.

Different types of bodies: (vv. 38-41) “from the earth” and “from heaven.” The seed that is planted in the ground has one type of body. The seed that has been resurrected will have another type of body. Each body has its own “glory.”

“Glory” = essentially that which characterizes and distinguishes a particular thing in the creation. The “glory” of something is that which is displayed about it in appearance and function.

The resurrection body: The seed is put in the ground as one thing. It dies. But through death (not in spite of it), new life springs up. But this new life, while dependent upon the seed, looks totally different. It is radically new, yet you know exactly what it comes from; i.e., it bears resemblance to the seed from which it came.

A triad of pre- and post-resurrection. First the pre-resurrection: “corruptible,” “dishonorable,” and “weak.” These are not equal to “evil.” They are subject to decay.

Our present state is not what God intends us to be. The seed is expected to be planted and grow into a glorious plant. This doesn’t mean that our body is bad. It is just not complete. It is, as Paul describes earlier in his description of the seed, in some sense “naked” (cf. 15.37). We are looking to be clothed with this resurrection body. (For a fuller discussion of this read 2 Cor 4–5.)

First Adam body, last Adam body: (v. 44) - Difference between a “soulish body” and a “spiritual body.” This is not the difference between “material” or “physical” (AV “natural;” followed by many others) and “non-material” or “non-physical” body.

The “in-the-first-Adam” body is the body that is from the dust and subject to decay. The “in-the-last-Adam” body is the resurrected body. The first Adam is made a “living soul.” The last Adam is made a “life-giving Spirit.”

Reference to Genesis 2.7 when God creates man from the dust of the ground and breathes into him making him living soul. Therefore the first body is the “soulish” body. This seems to be the “naked seed” of 15.37. Adam’s nakedness looks to be clothed.

Paul is not setting up a material v. non-material dualism. He is setting up good-but-not-yet-glorified v. glorified comparison and contrast. Paul is speaking in *eschatological* terms. I.e., Jesus Christ in his resurrected body is what God always intended man to be: fully clothed with glory and honor.

The first Adam is from dust and, because of sin, returns to dust (cf. Gen 3.19). The last Adam is “from heaven” having been clothed from heaven with this transformed body.

Our present state is in-the-first-Adam body. We are subject to decay. This is why we will die. But, as we have been in the image of the first Adam, so we will be in the image of the last Adam. We will have the same type of body that Jesus has. Our bodies will be transformed through death.

By this we are put on the historical timeline. We live in a time when the old age is still present but the new age promised by God has broken in. There is an overlapping of the old age in Adam and the new age in the last Adam (i.e., Christ).

Our bodily condition is the eschatological barometer, as it were, to tell us where we are on God's timetable.

6. RESURRECTION AND THE LIVING (50-57)

An inheritance problem: What about those people who are still living at the return of Christ. Will they have to die? If they don't die, what will happen to them?

In keeping in line with what he has been saying about the fulfillment of God's promises to his people (this is essentially *eschatology*), Paul speaks about *inheritance*. (Inheritance = what God's faithful people will receive when God gives us all that he has promised to give us.)

What God has promised us is "glory" (something, you might recall, we in Adam fell short of; cf. Rom 3.23). But if glory comes through death, again, what about those living at Christ's return and the resurrection of the dead?

There will have to be a change (i.e., a certain type of 'death,' a separation from the present condition); a transformation.

"Flesh and blood" cannot inherit the kingdom of God; i.e., the glorified world. The flesh-and-blood body is the "first Adam body" and, therefore, subject to decay. That kind of body cannot live in a non-decaying world.

For this reason, even though we shall not all sleep (i.e., the sleep of death), we must all be changed. We must go through the death-and-resurrection transformation in order to inherit the incorruptible kingdom of God.

O victory in Jesus!: Victory will be seen in totality at the resurrection of our bodies from the dead. Guaranteed because of Jesus' resurrection, but not completely realized until our resurrection.

Scripture fulfilled, "Death is swallowed up in victory" (Isa 25.8). Context of original passage: the great feast on the mountain of the LORD.

Note: death is the enemy (cf 15.26). It is the destroyer that keeps man from attaining what God intends him to be.

"O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?" (Cf. Hosea 13.14). Paul then says that the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.

Sin brought a sting to death and the grave swallowed man up, prohibiting him from reaching glorified life. The strength of sin became the law in the process of time. God drew sin into one place, Israel, through the law. It was Israel's position as a priestly nation to deal with the sin of the world.

But the law only intensified sin. God "set sin up" as it were when he drew it into Israel. Because then the sin of the world would be drawn upon Israel's king. Israel's king, or Messiah, would then be the one to take care of the sin problem. And so through the other side of the law we read Paul's statement: "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" (15.57)

7. RESURRECTION AND PRESENT LIFE (58)

"Therefore" - He is pulling all of what he has said together and using it as the foundation for what he is about to say.

How can Paul say this? There is both continuity and discontinuity between the body and the one that is to come. There is both continuity and discontinuity between this age and the age that is to come.

Certainly a seed undergoes a radical transformation and becomes a stalk of wheat. But you still have to have the seed. The seed is the point of continuity between the previous life and the life that is to come. So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What you do in this life matters. It is not the type of change in which there is nothing that matters in this life. That is, everything is so brand new that the old life has no bearing on it at all.

For because there is continuity between pre-resurrection life and post-resurrection life, what you do in the present matters.