

ARGUMENT FIVE: THE NATURE OF THE RESURRECTION BODY

1 CORINTHIANS 15:35–49

Introduction

What will the resurrected body be like? The kind of body we shall have throughout eternity has always intrigued men. The very picture of a body somewhat like our present bodies has even caused some persons to mock and ridicule the idea of the resurrection. This passage discusses the kind of body believers will receive in the resurrection.

- I. Two questions by an intellectual objector (v. 35).
- II. The pictures demonstrating the resurrection (vv. 36-41).
- III. The contrasting body of the resurrection (vv. 42-44).
- IV. The strong fact: there is a natural body and a spiritual body (vv. 44-49).

I. *1 Corinthians 15:35 Questions Asked by Objectors*

Two questions are asked by some objector.

1. How are the dead raised up; how can a decayed, decomposed body arise? How can life possibly come back into a body, especially after it has decayed, and in some cases been scattered over the earth?
2. What kind of body would a resurrected person have? What kind of body would it be if it was decayed and decomposed?

Every generation has its sceptics who question and sometimes scoff at the idea of the resurrection and of a spiritual world where those who follow Christ will actually live with God forever. In fact, Christ Himself faced the very scepticism Paul is facing here (see notes, Mt.22:23-33). Most sceptics make one great mistake: when they think of the resurrection, they think of a person raised in the very same body he had while on earth. Christ and Paul both show that this just is not the case. The resurrected body will not be like our present body. Our future bodies will apparently look like our present bodies, but their material and nature will be completely different. (See *Resurrected Body of Jesus*, Jn. 21:1; Mt. 22:23-33.)

II. *1 Corinthians 15:36-41 Nature Demonstrates Resurrection*

The pictures demonstrating the resurrection. Nature is full of *examples and parallels* that dearly show the possibility of the resurrection. Man is just so familiar with the examples that he fails to think of them as *examples and parallels*. Note how strongly Paul introduces this point: he addresses the sceptic, “How foolish!” Paul is not speaking to the sceptic in

contempt and bitterness, but he is angry at the lack of thought about the matter and at the total lack of belief in God and in His omnipotent power. Even if there were no parallels in nature, we should believe God. Therefore, Paul exclaims: “Fool, think — think about what you yourself do. You work and live in the midst of the very things that parallel and give example after example of the resurrection of the body.”

1. There is the picture of the seed and grain. Several points are made.
 - a. A seed is not quickened, cannot live unless it first dies. A seed has the potential of a new life and a new body in it, but it does not produce the new life and body until it dies. In fact, the seed cannot produce it unless it does die.
 - b. The seed that is planted is only a seed; it is not the full plant itself. The seed differs radically from the new life and body of the plant. What comes up out of the ground is radically different from what is put into the ground.
=> Note how nature clearly shows us that the resurrected body will have a different nature than our present bodies.
 - c. God is the One who gives every seed its own body. God is the One who is behind the whole process, who is behind the seed and the plant. God is the One who causes the plant to arise from the death of the seed. It is His will, His power, His process that He set in motion at creation.

Thought 1. Those who are sceptical and question the resurrection make two gross errors — so said Jesus.

Mat 22:29 *Jesus replied, “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God.”*

Luke 20:38 *“He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive.”*

Rom 14:8 *If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.*

2. There is the picture of animals; they all differ. There are so many different bodies of animals — their organization, shapes, forms, natures — why can a man not be given a different body from the one he now has? Why can a man’s body not be reorganized and rearranged?
3. There is the picture of earthly and heavenly bodies (vv. 40-41). The bodies upon earth differ from the bodies of the heavens. Each has its own glory and each differs from the other, including the sun, moon and stars.

The point is simply this: everywhere you look you see...

- an unlimited number of different bodies — different organizations, forms, shapes, arrangements, varieties.

- that God’s universe flows with planting and growing, life and change, organization and reorganization, disintegration and rebirth.

Thought 1. The major points to see are twofold:

- 1) Living things have both the nature and power to be reproduced in a different form or body. Therefore, it should not surprise us if we ourselves have the nature and power to be resurrected with a different nature and body.
- 2) All things have different bodies and a glory that differs from all other things. Therefore, we too will have a resurrected body with its own glory. The glory of our resurrected body will differ from the glory of our earthly bodies.

III. 1 Corinthians 15:42-44 Earthly Body vs. Resurrected Body

The contrasting body of the resurrection. There are four significant differences between our body now and the body that will be given us in the resurrection.

1. Our earthly body is corruptible; our resurrected body will be incorruptible. Corruptible means that they age, deteriorate, die, decay and decompose. But our heavenly bodies will differ radically. They shall be incorruptible: never age, never deteriorate, never die, never decay and never decompose. They will be transformed and never perish. They will be completely free from defilement and depravity, from death and decay.

1 Cor 15:50 I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

John 11:39 “Take away the stone,” he said. “But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odour, for he has been there four days.”

Acts 13:36-37 “For when David had served God’s purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed. But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay.”

Eccl 3:20 All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return.

1 Cor 15:42 So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable;

2 Cor 5:1-2 Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling.

2. Our earthly body is buried in dishonour; our resurrected body will be raised in glory. Our body is dishonourable, and nothing shows its dishonour any more than its death and burial. Every human body is ultimately shamed and disgraced, degraded and deprived of all it has. Every human body is doomed to become nothing more than a

handful of dirt. Think, about it. Nothing could be any more dishonourable than to take the wonderful mechanism and beauty of a man's body and see it become nothing more than dirt. Yet that is exactly what happens.

But not the resurrected body: the human body will be transformed into a body of glory. Glory means to possess and to be full of *perfect light*; to dwell in the perfect light, brilliance, splendour, brightness, lustre, magnificence, dignity, majesty and grace of God Himself.

Mat 13:43 *“Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.”*

Rom 8:17 *Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

Phil 3:21 *Who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*

Col 3:4 *When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

Rev 7:9 *After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.*

Psa 73:24 *You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory.*

Rom 8:18 *I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.*

2 Cor 4:17 *For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.*

2 Tim. 2:10 *Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.*

1 Pet 5:1 *To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed.*

3. Our earthly body is buried in weakness; our resurrected body is raised in power. While on earth our body is ever so weak: subject to sickness, disease and a host of other infirmities and limitations. Eventually it becomes so weak that it dies. In death the human body is utterly powerless: helpless, devoid of any strength and capability whatsoever. In death the human body is so powerless, it is unable to lift a simple finger. It can do nothing, absolutely nothing.

The resurrected body, however, is raised in power. It shall have a mind and body filled with strength, might, health, authority and control. It will be a perfect body, never subject to disease, accident or suffering. It will be a body so powerful that it will be able to control its acts and the circumstances around it — all for good.

4. Our earthly body is buried a natural body; our resurrected body is raised a spiritual body. Note exactly what is said:

1 Cor 15:44 ... If there is a natural body, [soma psuchikon], there is also a spiritual body [soma pneumatikon].

Note that the spiritual body (soma) is still a body just like the earthly body (soma). The spiritual body still retains the qualities of the earthly body. The difference lies in this: it will no longer be a natural (soulish) body. It will be spiritual. What does this mean? In essence, the body will have a different composition: it will be made for a different world, a different dimension. The body will be perfected and glorified: no longer subject to aging, deterioration, death, decay, pain, tears, sorrow or crying (Rev. 14:4).

2 Cor 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Phil 3:21 Who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. (See Resurrected Body, Jn. 21:1)

1 John 3:2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

IV. 1 Corinthians 15:44–49 Natural Body and Spiritual Body

The strong fact – there is a natural body and a spiritual body. In addition to what has already been given, there are three strong evidences that there is both a natural body and a spiritual body.

1. There is the evidence of Scripture: the evidence of the first Adam and the second Adam, which is Christ.
 - a. Their natures differed. The first Adam was made a living soul. This simply means that Adam was given “physical or human life” to live on this earth (see *Soul*, Mt. 22:37). Therefore, he could only pass on the physical or human life to his children or family. But not Christ: Christ was a quickening Spirit, a life-giving Spirit. Therefore, He can give a *new kind of life* to His family.

- b. Their order was properly placed. Adam, the natural and physical, was first; then came the spiritual which is eternal. Therefore, those who belong to Christ can be given spiritual bodies and live forever.
- c. Their origin differs. The first Adam is of the earth: he was born of the earth. But Christ is the Lord from heaven. He is, therefore, able to transform those who are His so that they can live in heaven with Him.

John 3:13 *No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven — the Son of Man.*

John 6:33, 38 *“For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world...For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.”*

John 6:41-42 *At this the Jews began to grumble about him because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” They said, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I came down from heaven’?”*

John 6:50-51 *“But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”*

John 6:58 *“This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever.”*

John 6:62 *“What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before!”*

John 8:23 *But he continued, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.”*

John 8:42 *Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me.”*

John 13:3 *Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God.*

John 16:30 *“Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God.”*

John 17:5 *“And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.”*

1 Cor 15:47 *The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven.*

2. There is the evidence of man's nature and his destiny. Men pattern their lives either after Adam or Christ, either after the world or after heaven. They who live *for* the earth and its worldliness are those who are living *only* after the first Adam; therefore, the only body they will have will be a body of death; that is, a body that will be separated from God.

However, the persons who pattern their lives after the heavenly Christ, will be given a body just like the body of Christ, a perfect heavenly body. All persons who turn from the image of the earthly to the heavenly (Christ) will bear the image of the heavenly.

1 Cor 15:-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.

1 Cor 15:49 And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.

2 Cor 5:2 Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling.

Phil 3:21 Who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

1 John 3:2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. ■