

How Are the Dead Raised?

(1 Corinthians 15:35-49)

INTRODUCTION:

1. I want to continue our study of the resurrection from Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15.
 - A. In our first lesson we looked at the resurrection as being an integral part of the gospel that was preached by Paul and the other apostles.
 - B. In the second we considered how *if there is no resurrection*, then there would be no gospel to preach (no good news), no salvation, and we as Christians are to be most pitied.
 - C. In the third lesson we considered how Christ has assured the resurrection for all, the order of the resurrection, and certain actions demanded by the resurrection.
 - D. Today I would like to consider the Spirit's words in answering "How are the dead raised?"
2. Lessons like this are important to help us learn to keep our focus on the resurrection, because that is what our service to Christ is all about (Phil. 3:7, 10-11 – "But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ...¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; ¹¹ in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.").
3. Keeping this focus is hard for us because...
 - A. Life here is demanding, requiring much of our thoughts and energy.
 - B. Our lives here are good for the most part. We enjoy life.
 - C. So, both cause us to forget that life in this body is not the ultimate life, but preparation for it.
 - i. We must remember that we are housed in a temporary body, but are not temporary beings.
 - ii. We must remember that the resurrection is coming, and the focus of our lives will determine the *purpose* of our resurrection (Jn. 5:28-29 – "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, ²⁹ and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.").
4. With these things in mind, let's focus on the Spirit's words that answer the question "How are the dead raised?" (1 Cor. 15:35-49).

BODY:

I. Questions concerning the resurrection (15:35):

- A. Here Paul turns his attention to addressing certain questions from the Corinthians that are presented as *objections* to the resurrection.
- B. The first is "How are the dead raised?"
 1. This question seems to be a reasonable one because there are certain very difficult problems the resurrection poses to the human mind.
 - a. Our bodies decay and return to dust (Gen. 3:19 – "By the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.").
 - b. That dust can be blown all over by the wind and moved about by the rain.
 - c. And this is just one of the issues that could be brought up.
 2. How can something that is reduced to dust, even molecules, and possibly spread all over the earth be reformed and raised to life?
- C. The second is "And with what kind of body do they come?"
 1. The logic here was that because **I** personally possess a physical body, for **me** to be raised I must have that **same body**.
 2. And that, of course, is problematic because this body will have died and decayed. And, why would I want it again, seeing it will get old and die and decay again!
- D. So, because some could not understand *how* the resurrection could take place, they rejected *what* the gospel said concerning the reality of the resurrection.
 1. Such reasoning is a serious trap to fall into, even concerning the physical world.
 2. Is it not justified to label something as impossible because we cannot understand it!

II. Creation supports the resurrection (15:36-41).

- A. Sowing and reaping support the truth of the resurrection (15:36-38).
1. Note Paul's reaction to using human wisdom to reject divine truth—**You fool!** (15:36a).
 - a. Paul does use a different word for fool (*aphrōn*) than what Jesus forbade us to use in Matthew 5:22 (*mōre*).
 - b. But the word is still strong in its rebuke of the *irrationality* of those at Corinth presenting themselves as wise!
 2. They were foolish in denying God's ability to do to human what He does to seed (15:36).
 - a. For, the very *ones, you* who sowed seed, were the *ones* who rejected the resurrection.
 - i. They understood that the seed must first die to produce a living plant.
 - ii. That they could not understand or explain the change in the seed that was *buried* in the earth did not cause them to reject the reality of the agricultural process.
 - b. So, why would they, **who are called to be people of faith**, think that they were justified in rejecting something God, the Creator, said He would do, simply because they could not understand or explain **how** He will do it?
 3. Paul answers the "what body?" question by pointing out that the bare seed sown is not the body which that seed produces (15:37-38).
 - a. God's creative power has made it so that a seed planted in the earth produces something that in no way resembles the seed from which it came (15:37).
 - i. If you had never seen an acorn, would you know that it would produce an oak tree?
 - ii. No! The body/tree that an acorn produces is far different. A transformation occurs!
 - iii. With this being a fact of nature, why would one assume that the body that is given to us in the resurrection would have to be exactly like the one that was planted, or buried, in the ground?
 - b. God gives the seed a living body *fitted* to that kind of seed (15:38).
 - i. What body is needed for that kind of plant to live and produce after its kind is the body God gives it (Gen. 1:12 – "The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good.").
 - ii. The Corinthians accepted, even took for granted, this truth concerning God's power.
 - iii. So why should they reject the idea that God could give us a new body fit for eternal life after our physically bodies are planted in the ground at death?
 - iv. We need not worry because God will provide the body needed for the eternal realm!
- B. Paul continues to address these questions by showing that the differing flesh of living creatures supports the resurrection (15:39).
1. Every creature whether human, fish, bird, or beast has been given a body suitable for them to thrive in their environment.
 - a. A fish's body is wonderfully designed, being streamlined and having fins, gills, and skin made so it can live and move effortlessly in the water! But it cannot live and fly around in the sky like birds do.
 - b. We may not understand the design (e.g., Sloths!), but they still thrive.
 2. So, why would it be thought impossible for God to raise up our bodies in the form needed to live in the environment of eternity?
 - a. And, God is eternal and is the Creator.
 - b. We will have a body fitted to us and for us by God that is designed for eternity.
- C. Paul reminds us that there are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies with differing glory given them (15:40-41).
1. Glory (*doxa*) refers to something's brightness, splendor, or radiance, etc.
 2. Heavenly bodies have their own glory, while earthly bodies have their own as well (15:40).
 - a. Heavenly bodies are those described in 14:41 as the sun, moon, and stars.
 - b. Earthly bodies refer to the things, or bodies, of this earth.
 - c. Though things of earth can have magnificent beauty, or glory, it is not the same as that of the heavenly bodies. Yet we accept that God made them and gave them their glory.

3. There are differences in the glory among the heavenly bodies (15:41).
 - a. The moon and stars are glorious but do not have the same glory as the sun!
 - b. Yet, we glorify God for the beauty they display and the wonder they provide!
4. If God can apportion the proper glory to all created things, can He not give us a glorious body fit for heaven? Of course!

III. "So also is the resurrection from the dead" (15:42-49)!

- A. All that has been said about 1) a seed dying first before it is given life and how it becomes a new living plant, 2) the differences in the bodies of humans, fish, birds, and beasts, 3) how there are earthly bodies and heavenly bodies and that they differ in glory, and 4) how there is differing glory even among the heavenly bodies, **is now going to be applied to the resurrection!**
- B. There are differences in our earthly bodies we *sow*, or *put into the grave*, and our *resurrected* bodies (15:42-44).
 1. We sow, or bury, a perishable body, which will be raised an **imperishable** body (15:42).
 - a. Our earthly bodies are not eternal. They deteriorate over time and are subject to decay.
 - b. In the resurrection God will give us a body that will not deteriorate or decay.
 - c. All that we do to try to keep these bodies going will no longer be needed!
 2. We sow our bodies in dishonor, but they are raised in **glory** (15:43a).
 - a. Our bodies are dishonored and disgraced by sin and the corruption it brought into the world.
 - b. The ravages of time humiliate us and take away what little glory our bodies had in youth.
 - c. In the resurrection that dishonor brought on by sin and corruption will be replaced with a glorious body fashioned for eternity by God!
 3. Our bodies are sown in weakness but raised in **power** (15:43b).
 - a. Our bodies are weak!
 - i. Our bodies are fragile and have little power in the grand scheme of things.
 - ii. They cannot stop the aging process, they come to be unable to resist disease, and will eventually succumb to death.
 - iii. And when death comes, our bodies are worse than weak, being left to be dealt with by the living, unable to resist burial or the decay that follows.
 - b. Our resurrected bodies will have strength, power, might that can fully withstand all of these things!
 4. We bury a natural body, but God raises up for us a **spiritual** body (15:44a).
 - a. This body that is buried at death is one *made for this world*.
 - b. At the point of death our bodies become no different than the body of any animal that has died, seeing that like them it is made of dust and returns to the dust!
 - c. But in the resurrection God will give us a spiritual body, one *made for the spiritual world!*
- C. The physical body proves the spiritual body will follow (15:44b-49).
 1. Paul states that that the coming spiritual body is just as certain to be ours as is the physical body we possess right now (15:44b)!
 2. To prove this Paul returns to the creation account to show that just as God *first* gave us physical life through Adam, He has since given us spiritual life through Jesus (15:45).
 - a. Adam, the first man, became a **living soul**.
 - i. Here *living soul* means God gave him a physical body that was brought to life!
 - ii. His body was the pattern for our natural bodies.
 - b. The last Adam, or Jesus, became a **life-giving spirit**.
 - i. So unlike created man made from the earth, the one giving us eternal life, Jesus the Son, is from eternity, from heaven itself.
 - ii. Jesus' resurrected body is the pattern for our resurrected bodies!
 - iii. That Jesus is called the "last Adam" shows that there will never come another person who sustains a relationship to humans that Jesus' does. Jesus and what He has done is God's final offer to mankind!

3. The order of this process is the natural body first, then the spiritual body (15:46-47).
 - a. This is proven by the fact that the first man, Adam, was formed from the dust of the earth, and when we die will return to dust.
 - b. While on the other hand, the second man, Jesus, came from heaven, the spiritual realm, and, I might add, has returned to heaven, which is where the faithful will go at the resurrection.
4. So, our bodies are bound to earth and destined to be dust until Christ returns and raises our bodies to be stamped with His own heavenly, eternal, spiritual image (15:48-49).
 - a. This change from the buried physical body to the resurrected eternal body like that of Jesus is the process of the resurrection (Phil. 3:20-21 – “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹ who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.”).
 - b. So for those who are the Lord’s, not only will we be raised to conform to the body of Christ’s glory, we will be given the glory and honor needed for our eternal residence and fellowship with God our glorious Creator in heaven!

CONCLUSION:

1. Know that this body, the one that will let you down, that deteriorates and will ultimately decay and return to dust, is not your final body.
2. The resurrection is coming!
 - A. God has given proof of that through Jesus’ resurrection and the ways of creation seen all around you as Paul has pointed out in the scriptures of today’s lesson!
 - B. To those who have given their lives to Jesus and served Him faithfully, He raises them to eternal life in heaven with God.
 - C. To those who have not used their life in this body to serve Jesus, the resurrection will be to eternal pain and suffering in the condemnation of hell’s fire (Mt. 25:41, 46).
3. Why not choose right now to live your life from this day forward for the next life, to live your life now for Jesus, so that the resurrection will be one of great and eternal joy for you?
4. That life begins by choosing to respond in faith to the gospel by R-C-Bp so you can be raised to live in newness of life characterized by hope and service to God!
5. Will you come to Jesus and the hope of being raised to eternal life today?