

The Body God Will Give – 1 Corinthians 15:35-49

Introduction – Look at your hand. Who made that hand? Who made that hand for you? That hand is a part of a body God made for you, and that body is yet but a seed. The doctrine of the resurrection is not merely about a resuscitation, but a transformation. It is about sowing seed and reaping harvests; falling asleep and waking anew. It is about a progression from glory to glory, and yet also a metamorphosis from corruption to incorruption. And while “*it has not yet been revealed what we shall be*” (1 John 3:2), Paul, who saw the resurrected Christ (1 Cor 15:8), testifies to an unfathomable glory yet to come.

Answering the Skeptic (vv35-38) – Paul is still answering the skeptics and those who are doubting that such a thing as a resurrection of the body is truly to be believed. And perhaps in our modern day, the skepticism is even greater. The idea seems ludicrous. Is God going to gather all the decayed pieces of my body and make a patched-up version of the old me? That must be the tone Paul hears in the questions of v35, hence his answer in v36, “*Foolish ones.*” The answer is right before your eyes and throughout all of God’s creation, a metaphor of greater truths. There is a continuity between your physical body now and your resurrected body then – but it is like the continuity between a seed and a stalk of wheat, or a lovely dahlia, or the eighty-foot Douglas Fir in your backyard. To each seed, “*God gives it a body as He pleases*” and in a similar way, you are seed which will be put in the ground and then one day God will give you a new body from that seed.

Glorious Inequality (vv39-41) – God loves variations in flesh, or seed, and God loves variations in glory. Different kinds of flesh bring forth flesh according to their kind. Among other things to note is that in our resurrection, we will still be humans, made in the image of God, but there will be a transformation, from humanity to new humanity, from creation to new creation. In fact, these verses remind us of the different days of creation, of man (day 6), of birds and fish (day 5), of the sun, moon and stars (day 4) and earlier of the seed-bearing plants (day 3). All of God’s creation sings of His glory now (Psalm 19:1), but it is an immature song, muted by corruption. We can also look around and see that there are various kinds of glory. God has created the earth, sun, moon, and stars with glory that differs, although all are glorious. Remember earlier we learned that man is the image and glory of God, and woman is the glory of man (and therefore the glory of the glory of God, or the glory of glories – 1 Cor 11:7). The glories of these bodies, the variations of God’s creation-flesh, and the differences between seeds and plants together show us God’s intentions for us in the resurrection (v42).

So Also is the Resurrection of the Dead (vv42-45) – God’s purposes are not thwarted at all in death; rather they are fulfilled in a great progression and transformation that He intends. And of course, the death and resurrection of Jesus testifies to this for all who are in Christ (Rom 6:5). The trajectory of history is toward greater glory. Our bodies are now subject to corruption; we will rot in the ground. But they are also placed in the ground (in death) in order to sprout and grow – in incorruption! And from dishonor to glory. And from weakness to power. And from a “soulish” body to a “spiritish” body. Do not take verse 44 as contrasting “material” and “non-material.” The contrast is between a body animated by one type of life and body animated by another type, “soul” and “spirit.” Our bodies are now dominated by a life force Paul calls “*soul*.” Our bodies then will be dominated by the “*life-giving spirit*” of the resurrected Jesus. From glory to glory.

From Dusty Men to Heavenly Men (vv46-49) – The difference between the Adams is not that one had a body and the other did not. The first had a “natural” or “soulish” and points to a body made from the dust and then life breathed into it by the Spirit of God. The second is “spiritual” and “heavenly” coming from the Lord and from heaven. The second is not less physical; it is actually more physical. The days in which we live now are the weakest, most uncoordinated, and least gifted days of our physical bodies. Something far better, more glorious lies before us (Phil 3:20-21, Rom 8:23, 29). And that future life begets eternal life in the present (2 Cor 5:14-17). Our lives are to lean toward what is inevitably coming, even against the stiff opposition of corruption before us. This is the victory that overcomes the world: our faith (1 John 5:4).

The Body God Will Give – We often think of sin and salvation in very non-physical ways. But our breaking and broken bodies, corrupted by sin and the world are telling us that we live in a world where “*the wages of sin is death*” (Rom 6:23). And so, look at your hand again. A time is coming when that hand will have no flesh on it. You will die; you will decay. But just as certain as your day of death is, it is just as certain that the day of resurrection is advancing toward us at the same rate of speed. This has been guaranteed to us, declared in the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the middle of history. That resurrection day will come for all, the just and the unjust (Dan 12:2-3, John 5:24-29, Rev 20:11-15), and bodies have been prepared for both. God has prepared your resurrection body. But listen to the words of Jesus (John 5:25). Those who will hear the voice of Jesus then hear the voice of Jesus now. Those who will live in resurrected bodies made to hold and display and cherish and enjoy the unfathomable glory of God are those who live by faith in Jesus now. They know what they have earned; they know what they have been given (Rom 6:23). The gift of salvation is like your hand. God made it. He chose it for you. And now it is yours – and so too your resurrection body to come. What must you do? Believe.

Dave Hatcher – September 8, 2019