

1 Corinthians 15:20-22, 42-58
What Happens When We Die: The Resurrection Body
Sunday October 23rd, 2016

The story is told of a little boy who in Sunday school studied the creation of Adam from the dust of the earth. Later that day, the preacher in his sermon talked about how when we die we return to dust. Well that was a lot for a little guy to think about, and when he got home he had even more to face. It was time to clean his room.

He put it off as long as he could but finally, reluctantly, he went in there to tackle a job that hadn't been done in a long time. Almost immediately, though, he ran out of his room wide eyed and breathless to his mom who thought, "Here it comes again, more procrastination."

Well the procrastination had a theological twist. The little boy said breathlessly, "In Sunday school the teacher said we were made out of dust. And the pastor said we were going back to dust." The mom rolled her eyes and simply said, "Uh huh."



The little boy said, "Well I looked under my bed at all those dust bunnies and there's a lot of people either coming or going under there!"

Today, we are looking at what happens after our bodies die and decay, in regards to the Resurrection of the Body, for on this earth it is indeed from dust we have come and unto dust we will return.

Dr. Barclay in his commentary on this chapter says, "1 Cor. Is both one of the greatest and one of the most difficult chapters in the NT. Not only is it difficult in itself, but it has also given to the (Apostles) creed a phrase, which many people have grave difficulty in affirming, for it is from this chapter that we mainly derive the idea of *the resurrection of the body.*" Last week we dealt with the phrase or doctrine, "He descended to the dead". This week is our affirmation of "the resurrection of the body".

We can learn much from this chapter about our resurrection bodies and also how that belief can guide our lives. If we have a firm grasp of our resurrection we can live victoriously today!



In these verses we see 4 aspects of our resurrected bodies, which Paul highlights by contrast. He speaks of our bodies being like seeds planted in the ground earlier in the chapter, which is why the word “sown” is used in these following verses. I would highly recommend reading all of chapter 15, at once, because it was written to be read and understood as a unit with the beginning and ending verses tying it together with the call to stand firm in the faith.

First, verse 42b, “What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable.” Our new resurrected bodies will be immortal is another way of saying this.

Second, verse 43a, “It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory;” Scholars are a bit unsure of what “dishonor” refers to, our rotting corpse or “our bodily feelings and passions that dishonor us.” In heaven our bodies, minds and thoughts will be perfect and glorious and all that we do with them will bring honor to God.

Third, verse 43b, “It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;” Our bodies are weak, subject to tiredness and sickness, and so feeble against the backdrop of the universe and eternity. We so often want to do things but our weakness stops us cold. In the life to come all the limitations of weakness, and sickness will be gone replaced with the perfect power and will, to do God’s will.

Fourth, and most importantly for our discussion today, verse 44, “It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.” The crux of the argument about the resurrection can circle around this verse. What does it mean to be raised “spiritually?” Some think it means that in the new heaven and new earth we will be completely filled with the Holy Spirit, something that is not possible in our corruptible bodies.

Paul's argument I believe is a bit deeper and yet mysterious. In fact, in verse 51 Paul says, "Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep (die), but we will all be changed—" So, what will "spiritual bodies" look like, be like? Well, as we just said, they will be "Imperishable, immortal, glorious, powerful and spiritual." They will be perfect, free of sin and sickness and pain as Revelation 21:4 says, "There will be no more death, or mourning or crying or pain." I know some here deeply desire to be free of pain and some can't be here with us today because of pain, so these words bring great hope.

Some believe what Paul was getting at was that our personalities would survive death and have a spiritual body. What the exact nature of our raised body will be is not known but we will be known in our new body.

And as 1 John 3:2 says, "Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he (Jesus) is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is."

Paul earlier said, "And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man."

And so what was the body of the resurrected Jesus like? There are very few appearances for us to talk about but these things we know. People recognized him, up to 500 at one time. His body bore the marks of crucifixion for a while. He ate fish. And most importantly speaking to a change in body; he could appear in a locked upper room, and disappear from a dinner table in Emmaus. Yes, he was changed, and so will we.

Now upon death our souls go immediately to Heaven through the "Bema" Judgment (See last week's sermon) to be with Jesus and all our loved ones who have had faith. Upon the Resurrection of the Dead and Last Judgment we receive our new bodies: perfect, healthy, eternal, pain free. And we will be recognizable to friends and loved ones.

We will be living in the “New Jerusalem” which will come to the New Earth and we will live with God forever more.

That is a thumbnail of what happens when we die, and the resurrection, and the resurrection of the dead, but I want to answer some common questions I have had over the years about life beyond death.

Is it ok to be cremated if our bodies are to be raised from the dead? Yes! Remember that we are going to be changed, changed completely. God is going to make a completely new creation; so I am not sure he will even need anything from this creation beyond our souls. Now some believe, that the bodies we live in now, and ever molecule in them will be used in our new bodies. Personally, I hope not in some ways because some of my molecules have been cancerous.

But the belief in our very dead bodies being raised from the dead is why in grave yards Christians are buried with their feet to the East. The belief is that Jesus will come back in Jerusalem and the bodies will sit up, stand up and face him. We will truly have to be changed to come up from 6 feet under, or from the ocean, or a thousand places our dust and ashes are scattered.

No, I believe as I study this, we will get something brand new, spiritual, eternal, but it will be a body and we will be raised from the dead. As Paul says in verse 50, “I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.”

Another question I get is, “I have been married 3 times, whose spouse will I be in Heaven?” Jesus got this same question as a trick question about a woman married 7 times as to whose wife she would be in the resurrection, and I will simply give you his answer. Matthew 22:28-29 reads, “In the resurrection, then, whose wife of the seven will she be? For all of them had married her.”

Jesus answered them, “You are wrong, because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither

marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.” Indeed things will be different, changed.

The question that follows this one, if people are bold enough, is there sex in heaven. Yes, if you are thinking are we going to recognize each other as male and female, but in terms of sexual activity? The scriptures are silent, but I don't ever think angels were exactly thought of as being sexually active.....

Now Paul brought up a subject that is tied with what happens when you die which is the return of Christ, or the Parousia. Again verse 51 and 52, “Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.

For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.”

Paul thought Christ's return was imminent. It would be in his lifetime or the lifetime of his hearers; so he talked about Jesus' return and the resurrection of the dead together. When the dead are raised immortal than death is destroyed because it can't kill anything or anybody. This is symbolized by Death being thrown in the Lake of Fire in Rev. 20:13.

Earlier in the chapter, in verses we did not read, Paul talks of the reign of Christ in power being fulfilled at his second coming. In the meantime those who obey Christ enter his kingdom here on earth.

You have probably heard of Premillennialists, and Postmillennialists. They both believe in a 1000 year reign of Christians here on earth, which will either be preceded by his return “Premillennialists” or he will return after the 1000 year reign “Postmillennialists”.

We are actually what are called “Amillennialists”. We believe the “1000” years” spoken of were symbolic of Christ's reign that began upon his resurrection from the dead and will continue until his final return. Most in the Amillennial camp don't spend much time talking about

Christ's return, because they trust he will return at the right time in God's timing and in the meantime we have work to do.

This is reflected in the final verse, "Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you.

Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

Our works are the evidence of our faith. They are part of our faith. Our works like our relationships of love follow us into heaven.

A firm faith in Jesus' Resurrection and our resurrection gives us the courage, strength and power to do God's work here on earth, to give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord. To give ourselves so fully to the Lord that when people see us, and what we do, they see Jesus. Read the story in the bulletin and see more fully what I mean.

The resurrection when properly considered and held holds great strength and power. It is the New Heaven and New Earth we strive for. The evidence of our faith is our works.

Today we have a group of people who next week will go down to Agua Prieta in Mexico to live out their faith in the Lord. They are given themselves fully to God. Today they will come forward for prayer as we dedicate them to their work.

If you are going to Agua Prieta please come forward at this time.