



CHARIS-MATTERS

STUDIES IN FIRST CORINTHIANS

Text

First Corinthians 15:35-49

Topic

The apostle Paul reveals that our future resurrection bodies will be incorruptible, glorified, supernatural bodies just like the one Jesus had when He emerged from the tomb on the Sunday after His crucifixion

Title

“Super Body Sunday”

Introduction

Until recently the oldest seed that was planted and germinated was a Judean date palm seed about 2000 years old recovered in 2005 from excavations at Herod the Great's palace at Masada in Israel.

In December of 2009 the folks at *Biblical Archaeological Review* reported that an ancient lentil seed found in a western province of Turkey dating back 4000 years that was discovered during an archaeological excavation had successfully germinated.

I think if he were alive today the apostle Paul would have Googled this same information. You see, in the first part of the text we are studying he argued that you can look at a seed that is sown in the ground and know that there will be a future, physical resurrection of your body from the dead.

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But he didn't stop there. He went on to show you what your future, physical resurrection body will be like. It will be like the body Jesus had when He stepped out of the tomb on the first Easter Sunday.

In His creation all around us and by His revelation given to us in the Bible, God has taught us about our resurrection from the dead. I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Look At God's Creation And You Will See Evidence That You Will Be Raised From The Dead, and #2 Look Into God's Revelation And You Will Know What To Expect When You Are Raised From The Dead.

#1 Look At God's Creation And You Will See Evidence That You Will Be Raised From The Dead

(v35-41)

Christians are often accused of failing to consider so-called natural or scientific evidence. Supposedly we check our brains at the door and believe things that are not substantiated by observation of the natural world.

It's not true! We consider the same facts, the same evidence, but we understand it in the context of God's creation and see that it makes perfect sense both scientifically and spiritually.

Paul invited us to look at the natural world for evidence of resurrection from the dead.

1 Corinthians 15:35 But someone will say, "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?"

This was probably an insincere question posed by critics of the future resurrection of believers. It focuses on the dead "body" as something that cannot possibly be reanimated. Under the best circumstances a corpse decays over time. Under the worst circumstances a corpse can be completely destroyed by fire, lost at sea, devoured by animals. I can almost hear Paul's critics chuckling as they pose these dilemmas.

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To which he answered,

1 Corinthians 15:36 Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies.

He called these guys fools. It emphasized the fact that sometimes people who portray themselves as being so smart, so educated, really say the stupidest things.

The theory of evolution is a great example of this. After all these years, not only is there no evidence for evolution, but advances in the sciences have established it cannot be true. Still, so-called 'smart' people hold to it.

Paul appealed to the natural world, to the properties of seeds, to establish that there is evidence for resurrection all around us. The "seed" you "sow" has the principle of life within it but nothing happens until the seed "dies."

1 Corinthians 15:37 And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain - perhaps wheat or some other grain.

1 Corinthians 15:38 But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body.

Pam got me two coffee plants as a gift. *They're totally cool!* If I want to turn my yard into a coffee plantation, I'm going to need seeds from those plants. I can't put a leaf, or a stalk, or even the whole plant, in the ground and expect it to grow. No, I need seeds - which appear dead and have no similarity to the plant until after they die and bring forth life.

No one looks at a seed and says, "How is a coffee plant raised up from this dead thing?" No, we expect seeds even millennia old to still die and produce life.

My natural, physical body is likened to a seed. It has to die in order to produce life. And, although there is obviously a connection between the dead body and the resurrection life it produces, what is raised from it is very different.

Paul expanded his argument by looking at two other aspects of God's creation - living things on the earth and the stellar heavens.

1 Corinthians 15:39 All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds.

Look around, apply the scientific method, and you will see that humans and animals reproduce after their own kind. The point here, regarding the resurrection from the dead, is that we won't change kinds after death. *You're not going to come back as a cow.*

The other aspect of creation Paul looked at was the stellar heavens:

1 Corinthians 15:40 There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.

1 Corinthians 15:41 There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory.

"Terrestrial" refers to the earth. Survey the terrestrial and you see an awe-inspiring variety. Not only among species but within species.

"Celestial" refers to the stellar heavens, or what we call space. Again there is infinite variety.

"Glory" refers to the radiance of the various celestial bodies we observe. Though we are fascinated with the moon, it's radiance comes from the sun, which is a star. Stars themselves come in all varieties.

When applied to the terrestrial, "glory" doesn't mean radiance. It means we have our own assessments of which life forms are the most precious.

Looking just at God's creation, at the natural world, you see that different bodies have degrees of glory; that all bodies remain in their own kind; and that life springs forth from death.

It is therefore no stretch at all to believe that after death you will be raised in a physical body after the kind of body you have now but much more glorious. In fact, *it would be foolish to think otherwise!*

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Ah, but we have more than the natural world, more than creation. We have God's revelation.

#2 Look Into God's Revelation And You Will Know
What To Expect When You Are Raised From The Dead
(v42-49)

In verse forty-five Paul said "and so it is written." God has filled-in the blanks by giving us His Word. We not only know we will be raised from the dead; we know exactly what to expect of our resurrection bodies.

1 Corinthians 15:42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption.

1 Corinthians 15:43 It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.

A dead corpse can be described by the words "corruption," "dishonor," and "weakness." I think these are general descriptors of death.

- "Corruption" summarizes the decay of our bodies. Even while alive we are breaking down, headed for death. After death the corruption continues in a big way.
- "Dishonor" reminds me of just how humiliating death can be. I've had occasion to be around lots of dead bodies as they were discovered. The way they are found can be rather humiliating. The whole process of removing and prepping the body - even when done with respect - is inherently humiliating.
- "Weakness" describes the human condition. At best, when our bodies are healthy, we need so much to keep them going - food, drink, and sleep come to mind. We're very fragile and subject to all manner of disease and injury.

Notice throughout Paul never talks about being buried. He doesn't talk about being cremated. It doesn't matter if we are burned or lost at sea or blown to smithereens. He sees all manner of death as being "sown."

No matter the state of my corpse, elements of it are the seed sown by God that will bring forth life in my resurrection.

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“Corruption,” “dishonor,” and “weakness” will all give way to “incorruption,” “glory,” and “power.”

- “Incorruption” means my resurrection body will not be subject to decay. I will not break down in eternity.
- “Glory” will characterize my resurrection body. For all eternity I will manifest the glory of God and will never experience humiliation.
- “Power” indicates my glorified, resurrection body will be self-sufficient. I won’t need food or drink or regular exercise to remain alive and healthy.

How can this be possible?

1 Corinthians 15:44 It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

My future body will be a “spiritual” body. It will be a real, physical body; but it will be quite an improvement from my “natural” body.

In the next few verses Paul tells us that it will, in fact, be like the body Jesus Christ has in His resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:45 And so it is written, "THE FIRST MAN ADAM BECAME A LIVING BEING." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

“Adam” was a real person created by God from the dust of the earth by God in the Garden of Eden. We believe this because it is revealed to us by God in His Word.

The “last Adam” is a reference to Jesus. As human beings descend from Adam and share in his characteristics, so those who are saved are the spiritual descendants of Jesus and share in His characteristics.

Adam had life but it deteriorated into corruption, dishonor, and weakness when he sinned against God. Jesus came as a man, lived a perfect and sinless life, rose from the dead, and therefore is able to give the same kind of resurrection life to those who identify with Him rather than Adam.

1 Corinthians 15:46 However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual.

1 Corinthians 15:47 The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven.

1 Corinthians 15:48 As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly.

1 Corinthians 15:49 And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.

There is a depth of insight here. It is worthy of much personal meditation.

The main idea, however, is quite simple and very delightful. You were like Adam and will die but you're going to be like Jesus when you're raised!

- Like Adam, you're going to die; your natural body is going to be sown.
- But like Jesus, you're going to be raised from the dead! You'll be like Him for all eternity.

(When I say "You're going to die," I am not taking into account the rapture of those who will be alive when Jesus returns. We'll see them in the next section, at the end of chapter fifteen).

Jesus rose from the dead in the same body in which He died but it was a resurrected, glorified body. We can observe a few things about His body and apply them to ourselves in the resurrection:

- Jesus appeared and disappeared at will. That tells me the resurrected body is not subject to the current physical laws of the universe. One commentator suggested we will therefore be able to 'travel' at the speed of thought!
- Jesus was recognizable but could alter His appearance. The two on the road to Emmaus didn't recognize Him at first. In the Revelation of Jesus Christ John has at least two very distinct visions of the risen Lord - one as our glorious high priest but the other as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the earth. I don't think we will go around disguising ourselves, altering our appearance as shape-shifters, but it does seem that while we remain recognizable to one another we might not always look the same.

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- We can deduce that our bodies will not need food or drink or rest because we will no longer have hunger and thirst and fatigue. However, there will be food and we can enjoy it without requiring it. Nor will there be any pain or suffering, whether physical or emotional.
- Our bodies will no longer be a hindrance to our obedience to God but, rather, be perfect instruments for following our spiritual impulses.

If you've been born-again you have a foretaste of eternity. You are already becoming like Jesus as He works to complete in you what He started the moment you were saved.

I bet you can't wait to be free of your current natural body! It's such a weight, such a burden, such an impairment.