

Iglesia de Carne

Studies in First Corinthians

Text

First Corinthians 15:35-58

Topic

While describing how the dead are raised, Paul reveals the mystery that the saints who are alive at the coming of Jesus will be changed in the twinkling of an eye

Title

“Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Saint”

Scrat may be scientifically accurate.

You all know who Scrat is, right? He is the acorn-obsessed saber-toothed squirrel attempting to store his prized acorn in the *Ice Age* animated feature films.

In 2012 a Russian team discovered a seed cache of *Silene stenophylla*, a flowering plant native to Siberia that they said (and I quote), “*had been buried by an Ice Age squirrel.*”

The mature and immature seeds, which had been entirely encased in ice, were unearthed from 124’ below the permafrost, surrounded by layers that included mammoth, bison, and woolly rhinoceros bones.

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Some of the seeds had been damaged - "perhaps by the squirrel" (they said) - preventing them from germinating in the burrow.

Other seeds retained viable plant material. The team extracted that tissue from the frozen seeds, placed it in vials, and successfully germinated the plants. They grew, flowered, and, after a year, created seeds of their own.

Radiocarbon dating suggested that the seeds were thirty-two thousand years old.

Young-earth creation scientists object, arguing that the Ice Age was triggered by the global flood associated with Noah some four-thousand plus years ago.

The seeds are considered the oldest to ever germinate.

But they're not. There are much older 'seeds' that have been sown that will most definitely come alive.

I'm talking about the physical bodies of deceased believers.

The apostle Paul will compare their physical bodies to seeds that have died only to be made alive by resurrection.

He will also answer an important question: "What will happen to the physical bodies of believers who are *alive* at the coming of Jesus?"

The two points around which I will organize my comments on these verses couldn't be simpler: **#1 If You Are Asleep When Jesus Comes, You Will Be Resurrected,** and **#2 If You Are Alive When Jesus Comes, You Will Be Raptured.**



#1 - If You Are Asleep When Jesus Comes, You Will Be Resurrected (v35-49)

Abel may have been the first human 'seed' to be sown. The murder of that righteous man by his brother, Cain, is the first physical death in the Bible. Plenty more have followed. With apologies to McDonald's, we could say of the dead, "Billions and billions sown."

Since you definitely will be raised from the dead with some connection to your original, physical body, Paul likens it to your body being "asleep" until it is raised. Elsewhere he makes it clear that your spirit leaves your body at death to be immediately, consciously in the presence of Jesus in Heaven.

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

These were probably insincere questions posed by scoffers of the resurrection. It focuses on the dead "body" as something that cannot possibly be reanimated:

- Under the best circumstances a preserved corpse decays over time.
- Under the worst circumstances a corpse can be completely destroyed by fire, lost at sea, devoured by animals.

In 2019, Washington became the first state to allow 'human composting' as a burial method. What is God going to do? Can He raise you from the compost pile?? Are you a man, or are you manure???

Paul once gave a simple apologetic for the resurrection by asking rhetorically, "Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead? (Acts 26:8).



Even though that is all the answer the Corinthians needed, Paul gave them an illustration.

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

The "seed" a farmer "sows" has the principle of life within it but nothing happens until the seed "dies" when buried. Until it is sown, and dies, it will not bring forth life. It dies, then is resurrected.

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

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

No one looks at a seed and says, "How is a coffee plant raised up from this?" No, we expect seeds to produce after their kind. And we understand that what is produced looks vastly different than its seed.

Likewise there is a connection between the dead body and the resurrection body, but what is raised from it is as different as a plant from its seed.

Paul explains all manner of death as being "sown." No matter the state of my corpse, elements of it are the seed sown that will bring forth a body in my resurrection. God may not have much left of me to work with; but, remember, *He created the entire universe out of nothing*.

1Co 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.

1Co 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.

1Co 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.



Here is a concise commentary of what we just read:

"We see earthly bodies differ from earthly, and heavenly bodies [differ] from heavenly. What wonder then if heavenly bodies differ from earthly? Or [if] the bodies which rise [differ] from those that lie in the grave?"

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

1Co 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."

- "Corruption" summarizes the decay of our bodies.
- "Dishonor" reminds me of just how humiliating both life and death can be.
- "Weakness" describes the general human condition. We're very fragile and subject to all manner of disease and injury.

"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 never experience humiliation. All my actions and activities will reflect the glory of my Creator.
- "Power" indicates my glorified, resurrection body will be self-sufficient.

1Co 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.



- Because we descend from Adam we have our current “natural” physical body.
- Because we are in Christ, we will have a “spiritual” physical body.

My spiritual body is not something immaterial. It will be a real, *physical* body. When we talk about the resurrection of the dead, we mean something physical.

1Co 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 in the Garden of Eden. Jesus confirmed that the Genesis account is literally true when He referred to Adam and Eve as a real couple who were married with God officiating in Eden.

Jesus is “the last Adam.” He succeeded where Adam had failed:

- Adam exercised his free will to disobey God, thus plunging the human race, and all of creation, into sin and death.
- Jesus subordinated Himself to die on the Cross in our place in order to save the human race, and to redeem and restore creation.

We are “living being(s)” like the first man. Descended from him, we are sinners headed for physical and eternal death. When a person believes in Jesus, He gives us eternal life.

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

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

1Co 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.

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

Like produces like in God's universe. We all begin like Adam. Believers end up like Jesus. "We shall be like Him" (First John 3:2).

Our focus has been on the physical resurrection body itself. Having a "spiritual body" is far more glorious than its physical characteristics. In the DreamWorks film, *Megamind*, Hal receives all the physical power of MetroMan, but he remains an imbecile, and goes rogue as a villain.

William MacDonald explains the spiritual body this way:

"The difference between a natural body and a spiritual body is that the... former is usually soul-controlled whereas the latter is spirit-controlled. God created man spirit, soul, and body. He always mentions the spirit first, because His intention was that the spirit should be in the place of preeminence or dominance. With the entrance of sin... God's order seems to have been upset, and the result is that man [is] "body, soul, and spirit." He has given the body the place which the spirit should have had. In resurrection it will not be so; the spirit will be in the place of control which God originally intended. A spiritual body is one that will be truly the servant of the spirit."

Let me suggest one result of our finally having spiritual bodies. We will retain free will, but be unable to sin. **There will be no second fall.**

First, let's be certain it is true that there will be no sin. In the Revelation we read,

Revelation 21:4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away..."

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Revelation 21:27 ... But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Nothing will ever defile eternity; and that includes sin.

How can we have free will if we cannot choose sin? Having genuine free will doesn't necessarily mean you can choose sin. We know that because God has genuine free will, does He not? He cannot sin. It is therefore not a contradiction to say there can be free will without sin.

We are not God, nor will we become 'gods' in the resurrection. But we will have His divine nature in perfect bodies and enjoy genuine free will incapable of sin in an eternal realm of righteousness.

#2 - If You Are Alive When Jesus Comes, You Will Be Raptured (v50-58)

We're immovable on the pretribulation, premillennial return of Jesus to rapture the church. Whatever a person believes about His coming, it's clear that when He comes there will be saints on the earth who have not died. What happens to them - to us - is the joyous topic Paul took up next.

1Co 15:50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.

The "kingdom of God" (here) refers to the eternal state or what we commonly call Heaven. In the Bible, a few folks visited Heaven, e.g., Isaiah and John. But you cannot "inherit" Heaven, i.e., spend eternity there, in your current body. If you are alive when Jesus returns, something has to happen to outfit you.

1Co 15:51 Behold, I tell you a mystery...

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A Bible "mystery" is something revealed to you that was not known prior to its revelation. The "mystery" revealed here is what happens to living believers at the return of Jesus.

1Co 15:51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed -

1Co 15:52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

1Co 15:53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.

The dead in Christ will be resurrected. Living saints will be "changed," to be "incorruption" and "immortal." **We will be immediately transformed into our spiritual bodies.**

The word "moment," when used of time, refers to a unit of time that could not be divided any further.

Your eye has three speeds: Wink, blink, or twink. We want to concentrate on the twink or, as it is more commonly referred to, the twinkle.

Technically speaking a twinkle is light reflected from the eye. For you to see a twinkle in someone's eye light must travel through the front of their eye, be reflected off their retina, and then exit their eye. How fast can that occur? I found the following calculation:

It would take $1/6 \times 10$ to the ninth power seconds, which is 1/6 billionth of a second, to make a person's eyeball twinkle. That is how fast believers will be changed who are alive at the moment Jesus comes to resurrect the dead. Not only is it fast when it happens, it could happen any moment. The return Paul



was describing is Jesus' return to remove the church from the earth prior to the Great Tribulation.

1Co 15:54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY."

1Co 15:55 "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING? O HADES, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY?"

Paul quoted from the Old Testament prophets Isaiah and Hosea. Even though those guys didn't foresee the resurrection and rapture of the church, they knew believers would be victorious over death.

"Death" refers to dying and "Hades" refers to the afterlife.

Before Jesus Christ rose from the dead, the spirits of all those who died did not go to Heaven. They went to Hades. Hades is not Hell. It is described for us by Jesus in the Gospel of Luke as a place with two chambers divided by an impassable gulf. One chamber is a place of paradise; the other, a place of torment.

When Jesus died, He descended into Hades and He led all believers out from there to Heaven. Now when believers die they are absent from their bodies and immediately present with the Lord in Heaven.

When nonbelievers die their spirits still go to Hades, to the place of torment. There they await a resurrection which occurs *after* the Great Tribulation and *after* the Lord reigns on the earth for one thousand years following the Great Tribulation. Once raised, they are judged and confined to the Lake of Fire, more commonly referred to as Hell.



Death and Hades are defeated if you are a believer. Your death doesn't usher you to Hades, but to Heaven.

1Co 15:56 The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law.

"Death," "sin," and "the law" provide a concise summary of the Bible's teaching:

- Death was the penalty decreed in the Garden of Eden should Adam and Eve sin.
- "The strength of sin is the law" means that God's Law reveals to human beings they are sinners who deserve the penalty of death.

Take any one of the Ten Commandments; for example. "Thou shalt not covet." Well, everyone has at some time coveted, which is sin. Thus the Law reveals we are sinners and deserve death.

1Co 15:57 But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Victory over sin... Victory over death... Victory over the Law. As a guarantee of our future rapture or resurrection, we have indwelling us God the Holy Spirit, and in yielding to Him, we can overcome sin, death, and the Law.

1Co 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

This is a pretty straightforward exhortation. One thing to note: Paul believed the resurrection and rapture of the church was a motivation to holy, helpful living. Far too many churches are failing to emphasize future prophecy. Worse yet - they ridicule those who do emphasize it.



Do you want to be the believer in Christ described in verse fifty-eight? Want that resumé?

Of course we do. Embrace the mystery - which in this case means that Jesus could return imminently for His church.

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