

# Bodies of the Future

1 Corinthians 15:35-58



## What Kind of Body?

- ❑ In Greek philosophy, it was generally believed that the physical body was only a shell for the real person living within. Ultimate salvation involved a release from the material body. Thus many Corinthians had difficulty believing in the *bodily* resurrection of believers.
- ❑ In 1 Corinthians 15:1-34, Paul shows that the bodily resurrection is absolutely necessary. Still, the idea of decaying corpses being raised from the grave, and then dwelling in heaven was very difficult to imagine. Thus the questions of verse 35. Read 1 Corinthians 15:35-49.

1. In verses 36-38, Paul uses the seed and plant as an illustration. How is the bodily resurrection of believers like the seed and plant?<sup>1</sup>

- ❑ In verses 39-41, Paul speaks of different kinds of flesh (earthly animal bodies) and different kinds of heavenly bodies, according to God's ordering and purpose. He differentiates the splendor of earthly bodies from the splendor of heavenly bodies to further illustrate the difference between the believer's present earthly body and his/her resurrection body.
- ❑ In verses 42-44, the difference in bodies is described as follows:

<i>The physical body is sown ...</i>	<i>The resurrection body is raised ...</i>
perishable <sup>2</sup>	imperishable
in dishonor <sup>3</sup>	in glory
in weakness	in power
a natural body <sup>4</sup>	a spiritual body <sup>5</sup>

- ❑ The "natural body" is represented by Adam, the first man (15:45-49). The "spiritual body" is represented by the risen Christ, the last Adam. First the natural, then the spiritual. All humans bear the likeness of the earthly man. Christians will bear the likeness of the heavenly man.<sup>6</sup>

<i>The first man Adam</i>	<i>The last Adam (the risen Christ)</i>
a living being (soul) <sup>7</sup>	a life-giving spirit <sup>8</sup>
of the earth	of heaven

<sup>1</sup> This analogy should not be pushed too far. Paul is not comparing the process of bodily resurrection to the process of seed germination, which is something we would not expect them to understand (Mark 4:26-28). His main point is to illustrate God's effecting of complete transformation, while there is still continuity.

<sup>2</sup> "perishable" (εν φθορά, *en phthora*) – "in corruption," subject to decay

<sup>3</sup> "in dishonor" – (εν ατιμία, *en atimia*) - humiliation

<sup>4</sup> "natural body" (σωμα ψυχικόν, *sōma psychikon*) – "soulish body" –suited for earthly life

<sup>5</sup> "spiritual body" (σωμα πνευματικόν, *sōma pneumatikon*) – a body animated by the Holy Spirit and suited for the age to come. "Spiritual body" *does not* mean immaterial body.

<sup>6</sup> The process will be completed at Christ's return (1 John 3:2), but Christians are already being transformed into Christ's likeness (2 Corinthians 3:18). And we are already "citizens of heaven" (Philippians 3:20-21).

<sup>7</sup> "God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being" (Genesis 2:7, NIV).

<sup>8</sup> "For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22, NIV; cf. Romans 5:12).

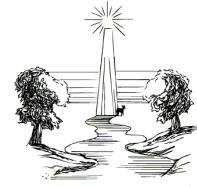
## What Kind of Future?

❑ Read 1 Corinthians 15:50-58.<sup>9</sup> Paul declares that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable” (15:50). However, imperishable bodies are required!<sup>10</sup>

2. So what happens if Christ returns while Christians are still living?<sup>11</sup> (15:51-53)

📖 “They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather the elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.” (Matthew 24:30-31)

3. When the perishable and mortal have been clothed with the imperishable and immortality, what will be the result? (15:54-55)<sup>12</sup>



❑ The “sting of death is sin” because the poison of sin results in death (Romans 6:23). The “power of sin is the law” because the law reveals our sin and condemns us because of our sin.<sup>13</sup> However, by the death and resurrection of Christ, sin and death have been defeated, though the full realization is future.

❑ Read 1 Corinthians 15:58.

4. As Christians, why should we be encouraged and motivated to “stand firm” and “give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord” based on the truths of chapter 15?

## Reflection & Application

- Do you believe in life after death? Are you afraid of death? Do you have a hope of heaven? The Bible says that a “spiritual body” is required for heaven. This “spiritual body,” patterned after the resurrection body of Jesus Christ, is given to those who have been united with him through faith. Do you need to trust in Jesus?
- As a Christian, how does the “victory” in the Lord Jesus Christ affect your daily life now? Though the final victory is future, Christians should be experiencing victory over sin now! Can you say that you are living in the light of Christ’s victory in these days?
- Prayerfully consider verse 58. Are you “standing firm” and “giving yourself fully to the work of the Lord?” Reflecting on the truths of chapter 15, identify some specific actions and attitudes needed to improve your “stand” and service to the Lord, and commit to do them.

<sup>9</sup> In Paul’s letters, a “mystery” is something formerly hidden but now revealed.

<sup>10</sup> Some of those influenced by Greek philosophy would agree with the first statement, but not the second statement.

<sup>11</sup> Paul says, “we will not all sleep” (that is, not all Christians will die before Christ’s return). The “trumpet” signals the return of Christ (Matthew 24:30-31, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

<sup>12</sup> Death will be finally defeated. Death is the “last enemy” (15:26). It is abolished by resurrection, beginning with Christ’s resurrection, and completed with the resurrection/transformation of all believers at the end.

<sup>13</sup> The law reveals sin (Romans 3:20) and defines sin as a serious act of transgression (Romans 5:15; 7:13). For what the law was powerless to do, God did by sending his Son to be a sin offering (Romans 8:3).