

Studies in 1 Corinthians

Lesson XXXXVII: The Resurrected Body

Text: 1 Cor. 15:29-53

29 Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them? 30 And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour? 31 I die every day—I mean that, brothers—just as surely as I glory over you in Christ Jesus our Lord. 32 If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus for merely human reasons, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised,

"Let us eat and drink,

for tomorrow we die."^[a] 33 Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."

34 Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame.

35 But someone may ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?" 36 How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. 37 When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. 38 But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. 39 All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. 40 There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. 41 The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor.

42 So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; 43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; 44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. 45 So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"^[b]; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. 46 The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. 47 The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. 48 As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. 49 And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we^[c] bear the likeness of the man from heaven.

50 I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

Discussion Questions

1. Some see in verse 29 affirmation of a practice not found elsewhere in the New Testament or early church history: baptism for the dead. What two prerequisites are missing to make this a full-fledged doctrine and practice in the church? (see Philippians 4:9; 2 Thessalonians 2:15)
2. When God created humans, what three-fold composition did he give them (see 1 Thessalonians 5:23)? How does this truth factor in to our understanding of the resurrection?
3. The pagan world believed in an afterlife (think *Casper the Friendly Ghost*). Why, then was the Christian idea of resurrection so controversial?

“Given the nature of Paul’s argument, he clearly argues in this manner because the Corinthians had challenged the resurrection of the dead since they believed it violated the metaphysical strictures of their cosmology. They apparently thought that it is absurd to think that a terrestrial body could ascend to the celestial realm.”

(Dr. Jeffrey R. Ascher, *Polarity and Change in 1 Corinthians 15*, University of Chicago, 1999)

4. Critics of the resurrection had two major objections: “1. How is it possible for the dead to come back to life? 2. If whatever remains of body were to rise from the grave, what would that body even be capable of?” How does Paul counter them in verses 35-49?
5. At the resurrection, will our spirit and soul be joined together a functional body of some sort? (cf. vv 20, 38, 42, 44, 52-53). What will be the dominating characteristic of this resurrected body? (vs. 44)

“The resurrection body is not wholly *pneuma* [spirit]. Caution is needed here in filling out details concerning the *psuxh* [natural] and the *pneuma*. But certainly he means to say that the "spiritual body" has some kind of germinal connection with the "natural body," though the development is glorious beyond our comprehension though not beyond the power of Christ to perform (Philippians 3:21). (Robertson’s *Word Pictures of the New Testament*)

6. When we are raised from the dead, will we be raised with arthritis, injured limbs, heart problems, or other remnants of the Genesis curse? (vv. 50-58)