

Exegetical Notes – 1 Corinthians 15:34-50

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Introduction: In the first parts of this great chapter on the resurrection of the dead, Paul has laid out the basic truths upon which our faith rests: Christ came to earth and lived among us; Christ died and was buried; Christ arose from the grave; Christ is coming again. He then turned his attention to a false teaching among the Corinthians that Christ had not been raised from the dead and that there was no general resurrection of those who believed in Jesus. In this passage, he answers the Corinthians' question about the resurrection of the dead, "With what kind of body do they come?"

1 Corinthians 15:34-50

Verse 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.

- Paul scolded the Corinthians for abandoning their belief in the resurrection of Jesus and in the resurrection of those who believe in Jesus. He finds it incredulous that they would abandon this doctrine which is core to our faith. It is to their shame that they are so easily led away by the arguments of other men.

Verses 35-38

³⁵ But someone will 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.

- Apparently, some of those who were arguing against the resurrection were asking, "How are the dead? With what kind of body do they come?" Apparently, they thought these questions were the nail in the coffin to the doctrine of the resurrection. That which is dead cannot be restored to life

after it is dead. So, how can the dead be raised after their bodies have been corrupted by decay? Resurrection was impossible!

- Paul laughs at their ignorance. He points to nature saying the cycle of life and death and resurrection is pictured there. He points to a seed, an apparently dead thing but which, when planted in the soil, comes to life again. But that which comes to life out of the seed does not resemble the seed which was buried. It is given a new body as God chooses.

Verses 39-42a

³⁹ Not all flesh is the same: People 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.

- Paul points out that in creation God has made many kinds of bodies. And it is so with the resurrection of the dead. If God is capable of producing such variety in nature, why would it be thought impossible that he could give the dead a new body?

Verses 42b-44a

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.

- The resurrected body will be far superior to the one that died. The body which died was not perfected. It was limited and frail because it was subjected to sin and imperfection.
- Because Jesus' death was substitutionary, removing from those who trust him to save them from the effects of sin, the new body is set free from the limitations of sin.
- The body that died was natural. But the new body will be spiritual. The new body is freed from the chains of sin.

Verse 44b

If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

- Here is the emphatic truth! If there is a natural body bound by sin, there is also a spiritual one for those who believe.
- As Jesus WAS raised from the dead, so shall those who trust in Him be raised from the dead. IT IS ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN!

Verses 45-49

⁴⁵ ***So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; 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 is of heaven. ⁴⁸ As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. ⁴⁹ And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.***

- (See Genesis 2:7) Adam was the man through whom life came. His body was formed from the dust of the earth by YHWH. If God made a body for the natural man, Adam, why is it thought impossible that God could give a resurrected body, a spiritual body, to those who die in Jesus?
- God sent Jesus to earth in a body of His making. A human, natural body, but yet one different from others because, until the end, it was not affected by sin.
- As life came through Adam, so eternal life comes through Jesus to all who believe. Those who do not trust Jesus to save them, have only that which is offered through Adam, the natural body, the body of dust. But those who believe in Jesus have both the natural body and the spiritual body offered through Jesus. Those who are trusting Jesus to save them bear His image, too.

Verse 50

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.***

- The "flesh & blood body," the adamic body, does not enter the kingdom of Heaven. The perfect body, the spiritual body which comes through Jesus Christ, does!

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon based on 1 Corinthians 15:20-34. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. All rights are reserved by *Cornerstone Fellowship* & The Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. They are used here by permission.)