

The Resurrection Body (pt. 2)

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[0 : 00] If you have your Bibles with you, would you open them up to 1 Corinthians chapter 15? We've been working through this chapter.

Paul has been talking about resurrection. He's been talking about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. He's been talking about the resurrection of those who belong to the Lord Jesus in the future, the day when they will be raised from the dead.

Last Sunday, we heard about how some have been kind of challenging the idea of resurrection.

Well, how is that even possible? What kind of body will we have at the resurrection? And Paul has been giving his answer to those objections.

He has said very clearly that we will be given a new body at the resurrection. The body that goes into the ground will not be the same as the body that comes out of the ground.

[1 : 13] God will give each of us a body according to his good plan and design, just as he has done at the beginning for us and for every creature that he has made.

We heard last Sunday about some of the big differences between the body that we have now and the body that we will have at the resurrection. The body that we have now is perishable.

But the body that we will be given to us at the resurrection will be imperishable. The body that we have now is a body characterized by dishonor.

That we die is evidence and consequence of having lived a dishonorable life. But the body that we will be given at the resurrection will be a glorious body.

The body that we have now is a body characterized by weakness, frailty. But the body that we will receive from the Lord when he comes is a body that will be described with power.

[2 : 21] And now today, this morning, we come to verse 44. Paul says, It is sown a natural body. It is raised a spiritual body.

I'm going to read from 44 down to verse 50. Paul says, It is sown a natural body. It is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

So it is written, The first man, Adam, became a living being. The last, Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural.

And after that, the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth. The second man is of heaven. 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. And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.

[3 : 31] 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 question that we're going to be focused on today is what does Paul mean when he says that it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

What does that mean? There's been a lot of discussion throughout the centuries on these very words throughout church history. And many have, some have come anyway to the reading that natural versus spiritual means essentially physical versus non-physical.

that our bodies will be, that we have now are material bodies, but the bodies that we will have at the resurrection will be immaterial. Along with that idea, many have kind of come to this line of thinking that heaven is kind of this spiritual realm where when we die, our bodies, our souls, our spirits will depart from our bodies and we'll go to the spiritual realm of heaven where we will kind of be in kind of a cloud of spirits before the Lord in a never-ending worship service for the rest of eternity.

And I think part of the reason for that is owing to this idea that some have taken from this passage that natural versus spiritual is really pointing to physical versus non-physical.

[5 : 31] And I think this is partly how we come to understand it just simply because of the word spiritual. The way that that word is commonly used in our culture today, it's to refer to things that are non-tangible, things that you can't detect or observe with your senses, things that you can't detect with scientific instruments.

That's what we typically mean when we use the word spiritual. But I and others don't think that that's what Paul is referring to here.

And I'm going to explain why in a moment here. But there's some implications to this. There was a whole, throughout the centuries, there have been philosophies that have said things like, our bodies are evil.

And the spirit or the soul inside of us is what's pure. Our bodies are the thing that are holding us back from our full potential.

Our bodies, they're like a prison. And when we die, our soul, our spirit will be set free. Our bodies are evil.

[6 : 49] And they're actually the thing that causes us to sin. These are some of the ideas that have been expressed throughout the centuries and are still held in some places today about the human body.

And if we're not careful, how we interpret this can lead us towards that kind of a view of who we are as people, of the human body.

But we must ask the question, if Paul is setting up a contrast between the physical and the non-physical, then why do we even need a new body in the first place?

If our future existence in heaven is just to be in a cloud of spirits for all eternity, worshiping before the Lord, why do we need a new body?

I would like to suggest this morning that perhaps we have misread this passage.

[7 : 55] It is sown a natural body. It is raised a spiritual body. I think the first clue is that word natural. The word that Paul has chosen there is the Greek word for soul or life or person.

And he actually uses this word again in the next verse. He says, So it is written, the first man, Adam, became a living being or soul.

That word is the same word as natural. Paul points us back to the creation story where Adam was formed from the dust and God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and it says he became a living soul or a person or being.

And so I think that's the first clue that natural doesn't just refer to physical. Adam, Paul's referring to him becoming a person, becoming a living being, the whole person.

And so that word that he uses there is not limited to just the physical. But I think the more telling clue comes earlier in Paul's letter to the Corinthians.

[9 : 08] He's already introduced this idea of natural versus spiritual. Back in chapter 2, verse 14, he says, The natural person does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, but considers them foolishness and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.

The spiritual person makes judgments about all things. My Bible actually goes one step further in this translation to kind of clarify, well, what does that mean, the natural person?

What is the natural person? My Bible translates it as the person without the Spirit. And so there's another clue that we get that when Paul says natural, probably what he's referring to is not the physical, but just the ordinary human level.

In this case, the ordinary human being doesn't accept the things that come from the Spirit. And so when we come back to chapter 15, what is the natural body?

It's the ordinary human body that we all have. It is sewn into the ground, an ordinary human body, just like we all have. And then we come to the word spiritual.

[10 : 33] What does Paul mean by that? Some have believed that it refers to the composition of the body, that the body is not made of physical, material, flesh, kind of flesh and blood kind of thing, but that it's going to be composed of spiritual stuff, for lack of a better term.

But if we go back to chapter 2, we see how Paul uses that word spiritual. In verse 15, he says, the spiritual person makes judgments about all things.

The spiritual person is the person who does accept the things that come from the Spirit of God. In chapter 3, verse 1, he says, I could not address you as spiritual, but as people who are still worldly.

The idea here, the way that Paul uses this word is not so much to refer to spirituality in general, as in a spiritual person as a person who's religious.

the way he uses it is with specific kind of orientation to the Holy Spirit. A spiritual person is a person whose thoughts and discernment is guided by the Holy Spirit, a person who accepts the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

[11 : 53] My Bible in chapter 3, the translation I have, says, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit. That's what a spiritual person is, the way Paul describes it.

And so when we bring that back into 1 Corinthians 15, I think that leads us to conclude that Paul is not talking about how our new bodies will be like metaphysically different, some kind of spiritual stuff as opposed to physical bodies, but that our bodies themselves will be the life that is in them when we are raised from the dead.

The power of life in us will be coming from the Holy Spirit of God himself. He will be the life force that works and causes us to thrive and live in our new bodies.

It is sown a natural body. It is raised a spiritual body. Paul goes on from there to talk about how there are two men.

Verse 45, so it is written, the first man, Adam, became a living being, the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. he sets up a contrast between Adam, the first man, and Christ, which he refers to as the last Adam, but there is a big difference between these two men.

[13 : 29] The first Adam, he became a living being when God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, but the last man, the last Adam, Christ, is not someone who became a living being but someone who gives life.

He is a life-giving spirit. And I think Paul brings that in to underscore his point. When Jesus comes back at the resurrection, we will be raised from the dead by the life-giving power of Christ and his spirit at work in us.

He goes on to contrast the first Adam and Christ, the last Adam in verse 47. He says, the first man was of the dust of the earth.

The second man is of heaven. 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.

And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man. We all bear the image of the natural man, our great ancestor, Adam.

[14 : 57] We have bodies like his because he sinned, he died, and so do we. But there's a difference between the first Adam and the last Adam.

The first Adam comes from the dust of the earth, but the last Adam, Christ, he comes from heaven and from glory.

Adam made a decision that affected us all in the garden. He brought sin and death into this world on behalf of all of us.

But there is another Adam who has done something on behalf of all of us, the Lord Jesus, and he is representative of all who belong to him.

He is the one by his life-giving power who enables us to, as it says in verse 49, have a future where we shall bear the image of the heavenly man.

[16 : 09] Just as surely as we have borne the image of the earthly man, we have a body like his, so also, says Paul, we, those of us who belong to Christ, shall bear the image of the heavenly man.

In other words, we will come to have a body like his. And just to confirm that we're thinking down the right track with Paul, let's remember what he said to the Philippians.

He said in Philippians 3, verse 20, but our citizenship is in heaven from where we eagerly await a Savior, the Lord Jesus, who by his power will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

That's the hope that we have. We, this, will be made like Christ's glorious body at the resurrection.

That's the difference between the natural body and the spiritual body. Verse 50, Paul says this, I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

[17 : 39] Paul comes again to this point. There is a kingdom of God that is coming. Jesus, he's already told us, is going to bring that kingdom in its fullness to this earth and it's a forever kingdom.

And this flesh and blood that we have right now is not fit to participate in that forever kingdom. This body that we have now is perishable.

It's not fit for the imperishable kingdom of God. We have to be careful here too. Some have seen in these words flesh and blood.

Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God and have taken that to say, well, see, we won't have physical bodies. We'll have spiritual bodies or we'll be like the angels.

We'll be spirits. But Paul has used this phrase in other places, flesh and blood, just to refer to humanity in general. It's been used in the Old Testament to refer to just the frailty of humanity.

[18 : 54] And so what I think he's saying here is simply this. The kingdom that's coming is forever. It's glorious. It's perfect. But this flesh and blood is perishable.

This body that I have is subject to decay. It breaks down. It wears out. It dies. It's not fit for the kingdom that Christ will bring.

And so I need a radical transformation of this. And that's exactly what Christ is going to do when he returns.

for all those who belong to him. He's going to transform this. And we're going to hear more about that next week as Paul goes on to talk about the resurrection moment and what will happen in that moment.

But as we draw to a close this morning I want to go to one final passage. Acts sorry Luke chapter 24 one thing that has come through clearly from this passage and from Philippians is that our bodies will be like Christ's body.

[20 : 19] Now I think we have to be careful here. I don't think we can press this too far. You know we can look at what was Jesus' body like after he was raised from the dead. But I do think we have to be careful.

There are some things that Jesus did after he was raised from the dead that are amazing. Right here in verse 36 it says while he was still while they were still talking about this he himself stood among them and said to them peace be with you.

He just kind of appeared in the room it seems. Some have even thought based on that that oh in our resurrection bodies maybe we'll have the ability to teleport or to walk through walls.

I think that that kind of thinking is fit for the realm of speculation and imagination and that we need to be careful to draw lines of connection like that.

But one thing that I think we can be confident of from this passage is that the new body that we will receive will be a physical body. Let's just read this quickly and see if you see that here.

[21 : 29] Verse 36 While they were still talking about this Jesus himself stood among them and said to them peace be with you. They were startled and frightened thinking they saw a ghost.

He said to them why are you troubled and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at me look at my hands and my feet it is I myself touch me and see a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.

When he had said this he showed them his hands and his feet and while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement he asked them do you have anything here to eat?

they gave him a piece of broiled fish and he took it and ate it in their presence he said to them this is what I told you while I was still with you verse 46 the Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day Jesus had a physical body and he seemed to take great pains to communicate that to his disciples look at my hands look at my feet touch me and see we can embrace one another you're not just going to pass right through me I'm not a ghost I'm not a spirit the word is the same word for spirit as for ghost in the original language a ghost doesn't have flesh and bones as you see I have what you see in front of you and with you this is what

I told you was going to happen the Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead this is the resurrection of the dead right here I'm with you I have a physical body and if there's any last doubts do you guys have anything to eat I got teeth that can chew this body is real and I think that we should carry what Jesus says and teaches to his disciples back over into our reading of what Paul says in Corinthians it is sown a natural body it is raised a spiritual body it doesn't mean that we won't have physical bodies we will heaven is not just going to be those of us who belong to Christ are disembodied spirits floating in a spiritual cloud in a never ending worship service

[24 : 23] God when he made us at the beginning he gave us bodies for a reason they were part of his good and perfect design and even though there are some who have pointed to the bodies and said they're evil they have problems God said when he first made us that it was good even before sin entered the world to have a body is part of what it means to be human Paul talks in his letter to the Corinthians his second letter and talks about how to not have a body to be in that temporary state where after we die and go to heaven we're with the Lord Jesus before the resurrection is like being naked it's like being unclothed and we long to get back into our clothing we were created to have a body right from the beginning to be a beautiful mixture and unity of physical flesh and blood and bone but also a spirit and a soul integrated into one and it's amazing how connected they are what we think up here if we get too much into anxious thoughts affects even our bodies we have physical symptoms of anxiety and what we experience in the world that we live in with our bodies shapes who we are in here at the deepest levels in our soul that's the way

God made us as human beings a beautiful unity of physical and spiritual or soul God gave us an amazing body he gave us ears with which to hear the beautiful sounds and music he gave us eyes to see the beautiful sunsets on the prairies he gave us these little hairs on our arms so that we could feel the breeze he gave us noses so that we could smell sweet fragrances he gave us hands so that we could touch and feel and take in the world that he created us to live in so that we could truly know things and people that's a part of what it means to be human and the resurrection body that we will have will be this perfected it won't be less it will be more all of those senses and capacities and abilities perfected so that we can enjoy God and enjoy one another and enjoy the world that he is going to create a new for us forever and all to his glory

I don't want to say too much about this this morning this is a whole nother topic but if God is going to give us a new and better body then doesn't it also follow that we're going to need it for a new earth to walk on to take in with our senses a renewed creation Paul talks about this a little bit in his letter to the Romans how the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed because it was subjected in frustration and it waits for the day when it will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God we're not just looking forward to a new body but a new world to live in heaven is not just some spiritual realm up there that we're hoping to go into and live in this vapor like spiritual cloud the message of

Christ the message of the apostles is that God will bring heaven to earth that's what we pray may your kingdom come where on earth as it is in heaven as John said in revelation and I saw the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven to where to earth to the new earth earth that God will make new and we have all of this to look forward to a new body and a new world a new earth to live in because our God and Savior loves us dearly and wants to give it to us as a gift as undeserving as we are isn't that amazing let's pray Father in heaven we thank you for your word we thank you for the glorious hope that we have we long for the day when these bodies which are winding down will be made new and oh will we praise you on that day will we sing on that day when we come out of our graves by your life giving power

Jesus and by the power of your spirit amen turn