

Resurrection Bodies (All-Age Talk)

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[0:00] Noemi, thank you. 1 Corinthians is written to people in the city of Corinth, and the city of Corinth is a really advanced place, it was, full of smart people, sharp people who don't have much time for silly beliefs.

And so at the start of this passage, I think you're meant to hear the sneering almost, the come on I can't believe all this rubbish in the question of verse 35.

Do you see it? But someone will ask, okay Paul, I've got something for you, answer me this, how are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?

Paul, you're going on and on about dead people being raised when Jesus comes, that sounds lovely, but have you ever seen a dead body? Have you ever seen what's left of a corpse after a year or ten years? Tell me then about this dead disintegrating thing. How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come from something like that? Even if you strip out the Corinthian sort of sneering disbelief, you can understand that kind of question, can't you?

[1:19] There was a guy called Richard Wilson, he was an actor. He played Victor Meldrew in One Foot in the Grave. It was a 1990s English sitcom, and a while back he did a BBC documentary about our society's attitude towards death.

The programme was called Two Feet in the Grave. It was a pretty bleak hour of TV, and here's a reviewer describing one bit. Forgive me if this is a little bit shocking to us.

Wilson took us through a cremation, looking into a furnace through a tiny door. A skull yawned in lava-coloured flame. Hot bones were raked into a tray.

When they'd cooled to off-whites, they were pulverised and poured into a dark blue box. Grey-white shingle. Seven to eight pounds of man. All that remains. A little piece of foreshore.

I mean, 80 years' time or so, maybe, say 80 years' time, every single one of us, I will have thought, will have died. We'll be buried six feet under and decomposing.

[2:27] Or we'll be seven to eight pounds of grey-white shingle. This is the question. Am I really to believe that I will be raised from the dead?

Like, I die and my soul goes to heaven. That makes some sort of sense. But could it be me, dead, buried, cremated, disintegrating, and then somehow me, woken, raised bodily, standing and breathing? Really?

How on earth will that happen? And what kind of body will I have in eternity? Well, in our verses today, Paul teaches us.

So say that you believe that Christ was raised from the dead bodily, verses 1 to 11. You believe that. Say you believe that when Jesus comes, all who belong to him will be raised bodily, verse 20 onwards.

Now Paul teaches us about our resurrection bodies. How we will be raised. With what kind of body we will have.

[3:41] He's not speculating. He's not painting pretty pictures. He wants us to know how it will be for every Christian believer on the day Jesus Christ comes again.

He wants to instruct us and teach us. He wants to fire your imagination. He wants to give you and me a true and concrete vision of what we will experience beyond the grave.

He wants you to be so confident in your certain bodily future. He wants you to be so thrilled by the prospect of a resurrection body. That in your life now, you will stand firm with full of hope, faith in your Lord and Saviour Jesus.

So get into this passage with me. Here's the question. How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body will they come? And Paul says to the cynics here, how foolish. How foolish to mock any notion of resurrection bodies.

Because, follow along with me, firstly, look around you and think and imagine. In verses 36 to 41, Paul shows that with a bit of thought and imagination, you can start to see an answer to these questions.

[5 : 04] How are we raised? And with what kind of body? First, look around you and think about seeds and plants.

It's verse 36. Listen to this. What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed.

Perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined. And to each kind of seed he gives its own body. Do you understand that?

I'm not a farmer. I don't quite know one end of a daffodil from another. But seeds in the ground and then plants and growing, I do get. I get that.

Maybe you've got an allotment and you grow vegetables. Or you're a flower grower. You know about this. So say I have some pumpkin seeds in my hand.

[6 : 01] Just small seeds. They won't be made into pumpkins unless I sow them. I put them in the ground. They die. And when I want to grow pumpkins, I don't take an enormous fully grown pumpkin and shove it in the ground and hope for the best.

I sow the little naked seed in the ground. And then do you know what happens? The creator God gives that tiny seed buried in the ground a body.

Springing out and up. A full, round, soft, smooth pumpkin. It's God who makes that happen.

You know? Think about it. For sure the pumpkin comes from the seed. There's continuity between the dying in the ground seed and the rising up pumpkin.

Because pumpkin seeds produce pumpkins. And yet the change between a seed and a pumpkin. What a massive transformation. Dying seed to living crop.

[7 : 12] Do you get that gardening thing? Can you see that in your mind's eye? This kind of thing, dying in the ground, something new coming up, is around us all the time. If you've got a garden, go out and look in it.

Go to your allotment and sit down and think about it. As you drive along the A14, have a look at the fields either side as you go home or you go somewhere else.

There is actually God-powered, call it resurrection, everywhere. From naked seeds beneath, flowers and plants and crops springing up from the ground.

It's what God does in his world every day. So now imagine yourself. A dead, naked body sewn in the ground.

And then what will come from you? There'll be continuity. From a dying in the ground, Chris, will come a rising up, Chris.

[8 : 15] And yet the change. God will do it as he determines, as he gives me by his grace a new transformed body.

He will do that for me. Think, is that kind of wacky to really believe that? It's not. It's the kind of thing God does. Paul says, think about it.

That's seeds and plants. Okay, think next about living creatures with custom-designed bodies. What do we mean? That's verse 39.

Check this out. Not all flesh is the same. People have one kind of flesh. Animals have another. Birds another. And fish another. You say, that's pretty obvious.

On the fifth day of creation, in Genesis 1, God said, let the water team with living creatures and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky.

[9 : 13] And God did that. He created them different from each other. I didn't quite have to look this up. Fish have scales and fins and gills for breathing.

Sort of behind their neck, I think. Fish are custom-designed for a watery environment. Is that obvious? Birds have wings and stuff like that.

They are designed by God for flapping through the air. And then there's animals. And then there's you. And you can't breathe underwater. And you can't flap your arms and fly.

Because your body is custom-designed by God for dry land. Is that super obvious? It is. We have different bodies given by God for different environments.

We say, what kind of body will we have in God's new creation? Paul says God is more than able to custom-design your body for eternity.

[10:17] Okay, lastly, think about shining and splendid heavenly bodies. Verse 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 body is another. The sun has one kind of splendor. The moon another and the stars another. And stars differ from stars in splendor.

So in our world we have heavenly bodies and earthly bodies. Go outside and look up at what God has created. He's made the sun and the moon and the stars.

And notice how they shine in varied splendor. Look at the pale light of a moon on a clear night. Or the blazing yellowy radiance of the sun at the start of a new day.

Different kinds of splendor radiating out. This is what God makes. He's not saying he's going to make you like a star in the sky.

[11:19] He's not. But can you imagine somehow your body shining with the same splendor as your heavenly King Jesus?

This is the first thing. To those questioning how on earth are the dead raised and what kind of body, Paul says in all seriousness, it's not babyish this, it's not Sunday school.

He says look around in this God-given, God-created world and see what our God does. Open your eyes and think and allow your imagination to be fired.

To naked seeds dead in the ground he gives amazing bodies, flowers and pumpkins and trees. To each kind of seed its own body, his gift, by his power.

He fits his different creatures for their different environments. He clothes earthly and heavenly bodies in degrees of splendor. His creative work all around us.

[12:27] And if you can start to think and imagine and see that, it should help us now grasp his recreative work.

What God will do for us and our bodies. Because, point two this morning, so will it be with the resurrection of the dead.

In verses 42 to 44 now, Paul draws four contrasts. Four contrasts between the body that is sown, the body that dies is buried and cremated, and the body that is raised.

And God is saying to us, this is how it will be for you and your body and all who are in Christ. So just walk through this with me and think about this with me and allow this teaching to get into you.

So in verse 42, with seeds to plants and animals and birds and sun and moon and stars all there in your imagination, so will it be, says Paul, with the resurrection of the dead.

[13:40] First contrast. The body that is sown, think seed here, your body buried in the ground. The body that is sown is perishable.

It is raised imperishable. Perishable means decaying and dying and disintegrating. And this is the curse of life for sinners in a fallen world under the judgment of God.

that we decay. And it dominates our existence. Right now today, you and I are ageing and going downhill.

Some of us will feel this very sharply. You're not as strong as you were. Your body weakening. Your organs starting to give up.

You're exhausted more than you used to be. Some of us will be aware of decaying mentally. We'll forget more. Our minds slowly going.

[14:46] So terrifying when you think that's going to happen to you and you're heading towards increased dementia. We're decaying and then we die. The body is sown perishable.

But, says Paul, it's raised imperishable. On the day when you are raised from death by his power, your mind and your body will be restored.

Instead of decaying and dying, all of that will be gone. And instead, you will flourish and live. Your body and your organs and your mind will enjoy health and strength again.

You will no longer tire. You will breathe freely and think sharply. You will have fullness of life in your resurrected body.

Verse 43, next. The body is sown in dishonour. It is raised in glory. What's that about? Dishonour may mean a body that in this fallen world is brought low through sorrow or frailty or grief.

[15:58] Dishonour here can also mean shame. Because our bodies and brains are shot through, aren't they? With sinful desires. Things you can't get rid of.

And we have within us deeply ingrained habits and addictions that cling to us. I just feel physically. I can't stop. I can't stop. More than that, our bodies carry the memories and the marks of things we've

done, physically or sexually.

Our bodies carry the trauma of shameful things done to us that mark us. Our bodies keep the score of trauma and hurt and sin.

Riddled through with habits and marks, our bodies can feel clouded with shame. Makes us want to curl up and hide away. But the body is raised in glory.

In splendour. On resurrection morning, somehow your raised body will be radiant. You'll have no more dishonour. With your desires straightened out and your addictions broken, you will feel pure and healed.

[17 : 16] because you will be. With sin no longer infecting you and shame no longer sticking to you, with a deep from the heart purity, you will stand straight and you will shine like the sun.

Can you imagine that? Raised imperishable, raised in glory. Third, verse 43, the body is sown in weakness. It is raised in power.

That is, in our decaying, disobedient bodies, you and I now are really so very weak and vulnerable. As we struggle to serve God, we sweat and hurt.

For some of us, even the most basic tasks feel beyond us. It hurts to bend down and lift something up. I can't think clearly enough to pray.

My obsessive compulsiveness cripples me. Some of us with a cluster of illnesses we feel we're just going to have to live with. Some chronically fatigued.

[18 : 21] Some with cataracts, cancer, diabetes. Some of us disabled, we call it, or hormonally imbalanced. If only I had the strength to serve him as I want.

Says Paul, sown and dying in weakness, our bodies now. The body is raised in power. Can you imagine that? Your resurrection body will be strong and mended and able.

You will no longer obsess. You will no longer hurt. You will stand and live in the presence of your God and you will serve him with energy.

This is the first three wonderful contrasts. As a sinner in a fallen world, you live and die perishable, shot through with shame and weakness, a naked seed.

Imagine the change as your body is raised imperishable in splendour and power. It's no fairy tale, that. It's our God-given future. Listen to C.S. Lewis speaking.

[19 : 33] He will make the feeblest and the filthy of us into a dazzling, radiant, immortal creature, shot all through with such energy and joy and wisdom and love as we cannot now imagine.

A bright, stainless mirror which reflects back to God his character perfectly. That is how we'll be. There is one more contrast in verse 44 onwards.

Paul writes, it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. I think what he means is you and I live and die with an ordinary human life body.

We have a body like the first man, Adam. We have a body fitted for this world now. Earthy and dusty and naked with God's breath in us like Adam.

But we will be raised a spiritual body. We'll have a body like the last man, Jesus. A body fitted for God's new world.

[20 : 40] Heavenly and robed in splendour and flooded with God's Holy Spirit like Jesus himself. Let me just read and see this contrast spelled out between the natural body, our body now, the first living, dusty, earthy man and then this spiritual body and the last life-giving, spirit, heavenly man.

I don't think I quite understand it yet. But look, middle of verse 44, if there is a natural, ordinary human life body, there is also a spiritual, Holy Spirit-filled body.

So it is written, the first man, Adam, became a living being, the last Adam, our risen Lord Jesus, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual didn't come first but the natural and after that the spiritual.

Jesus came to bring in a whole new level of human bodily life. Holy Spirit-flooded, heavenly life for you.

The first man, Adam, was of the dust of the earth, verse 47. The second man, Christ, is of heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth and as is the heavenly man, Christ, so also are those who are of heaven and just as we born the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.

[22 : 16] We're just asking today, how will it be for us? How will it be for all who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ? If Christ has been raised and he has, if there is a coming resurrection of the dead and there will be, how will it be for you and me on the day Jesus comes?

Paul says, for you and me living now in these earthy, decaying, dishonourable, weak bodies, soon to die and disintegrate, how will it be?

By God's grace and by God's power, the naked seed of your body sown in the earth will be raised and changed.

your saviour will wake you on that day and you'll rise with a new imperishable body pure and radiant and free of sin.

You, yet now healed and whole and flooded with God's Holy Spirit and you'll no longer be a naked seed, you'll be clothed.

[23 : 30] It's what verse 49 is saying right at the end, the climax of this bit, just as we have born, just as we've worn and been clothed with the image of the earthly man, so shall we wear the image of the heavenly man.

You and me and millions upon millions of followers of Jesus are heavenly resurrection bodies clothed and fitted for God's new world.

We will be clothed in his likeness. We will be in our bodies fully like the heavenly man. We will shine in glory like Jesus.

There's nothing to do today on the back of this passage except to think and imagine and put your faith in this God who raises the dead and will raise you.

And so Paul would say to us today, God would say to us, in your decaying body today with this certain concrete hope of bodily resurrection before you, simply hold firmly to the faith you have in him and never let go because you will die and he will raise you and you will be clothed in heavenly glory.

[24 : 55] Amen.