

3. A Spiritual Body

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[0 : 00] Now in our Bibles, if you could turn please to page 961, the passage we are reading today is verses 35 to 49.

Paul has established in the first few verses the saving gospel that depends on Jesus dying and rising again. And he's talked about the implications of that, the sure hope.

And now he's going on to talk about the spiritual body, the resurrection body, in verse 35. Paul writes, but someone will ask, how are the dead raised?

With what kind of body do they come? You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain.

But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. For not all flesh is the same.

[1 : 12] But there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. There are heavenly bodies, and earthly bodies.

But the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another kind. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars.

For star differs from star in glory. So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable.

What is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor. It is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness. It is raised in power. It is sown a natural body.

It is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, the first man, Adam, became a living being.

[2 : 15] The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first, but the natural, and then the spiritual.

The first man was from the earth, a man of dust. The second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust.

And as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

Amen. And may God bless to us those wonderful and glorious words. You know how sometimes we come across someone who appears to have everything going for them.

All the advantages, all the privileges you can imagine. One such young man was exactly like that. He had good looks, he had brains, and he had a splendid body, and he was a great athlete.

[3 : 26] Everything, the world was opening up in front of him. And then one day, feeling unwell, he went to see his doctor, and he discovered that he had the beginnings of an incurable illness.

It wasn't long before he had to stop his athletic training. Not long after that, he was confined to a wheelchair. It wasn't all that much longer before he was confined to bed.

And as he was lying in his bed, death approaching, a friend visited him and said to him something like this, It's really tragic to see that splendid body of yours going the way it's done.

And he replied, Yes, it would be if this was the only body I was ever going to have. You see, his advantages in this world had all been gradually taken away from him.

His body had gradually gone downhill. He was very, very conscious, as Paul says, that he bore the image of the man of dust. But this faith assured him he was going to bear the image of the man of heaven.

[4 : 41] What happened to that young man is going to happen to every one of us sooner or later. Not in the same way, not in the same circumstances.

It is going to happen unless the Lord returns before then. And this is what Paul is speaking about in this section. He's told us we have a saving gospel based on solid historical facts.

He's told us because of that we have a sure hope. And now he's answering questions. The kind of questions that either the Corinthians had asked him or are likely to raise in their minds and in our minds.

What, in verse 35, someone will ask, How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come? So Paul is looking at how this is going to happen.

Not in the sense of the mechanics. He's not telling us about the physics or the chemistry or the physiology. That's not what he's interested in. He's interested in the sequence of events by which these bodies we have now will be transformed into the likeness of Christ's glorious body.

[5 : 51] See, the Corinthians, as I said the last two weeks, did not want the resurrection of the body. They saw it simply as the reanimation of the corpse. He looked at the corpse and thought, Well, it's good to have got rid of that.

We don't want that back again. Paul is saying, Fool, you foolish ones. Possibly you have to be an apostle to get away with saying this to people. That's what Paul says.

And he's using fool in the biblical sense of someone who takes God out of account. And the verses I read earlier on from Philippians later on, he writes this, Our citizenship is in heaven, and from there we await a saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly bodies to be like his glorious body.

So it's going to happen. And it's going to be part of something bigger. That's the thrust of these verses. It's going to be part of the transformation of the whole of creation.

Not just those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Not just those who have given their lives to him. The whole of creation is going to be released from the curse, from its fallenness, and going to be restored.

[7 : 06] Because behind the Corinthian denial of the bodily resurrection lies the denial of the whole new creations. The Corinthians thought spirit was good, matter was evil.

Now, C.S. Lewis said, God likes matter. He made it. And that's what he's going to do in the new creation. He is going to restore and renew this creation into something glorious beyond belief.

So how does Paul develop his argument? He's still thinking about the phrase in accordance with the scriptures. And he has two great themes here. He says, first of all, look at creation.

In verses 35 to 44. God has made the universe so that bodies can move from one kind of existence to another.

Think of the caterpillar and the butterfly, for example. Now, they are organically linked, moving from one form of existence to another. Every single person in this room was a fetus in a womb.

[8 : 10] The fetus in the womb becomes a full-grown, living, breathing human being. So there's the two principles here. One is of organic unity between the earlier stage and the other is transformation.

That's what Paul is saying. Look at creation. If you don't believe me, look at what God has done and can do in creation. Look at the earth, first of all, he says.

In fact, look in your hand. Pick up a seed. Look at that seed in your hand. And then look at the plant which grows from that seed. Now, you don't have the one without the other.

The plant and the seed don't particularly look alike, but they are organically related. The power of God to transform. Look at animal life.

Different bodies adapted to different spheres. Verse 39. Not all flesh is the same. One kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish.

[9 : 08] Look at the earth. Look at the world around us. Even in its fallen state. The amazing beauty, the amazing variety, the amazing colour of this universe. Look at how, in springtime, the plants grow again.

The leaves appear on the trees. And once again, the ancient promise of God is fulfilled. As long as the earth remains, these things will continue. Then he says, still looking at creation, look at the sky.

Look up at the night sky. There's no dull uniformity there. The different stars shining with different colours. Look up, look up, look at the sun.

Look at the moonlight on the waters. As he said, there are heavenly bodies, verse 40, there are earthly bodies. The glory of heavenly is of one kind. The glory of the earthly is another.

One glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars. That's what's going to happen, he says, with human beings. When, who belong to Christ, when their bodies are changed.

[10 : 11] A little glimpse of that was given in Moses and Elijah appearing on the mount of transfiguration with Jesus as they shone in the light there.

Paul says, look at the earth, look at the sky. This is all going to happen at the resurrection. Verses 42 to 44.

He talks about four transformations which are going to happen. So it is, he says, with the rest of, what is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable.

Perishable, weakness, illness, death, decay. Imperishable. Now this is not just the reversal of death, it's not even just the rewinding of the tape, it's the springing of new life.

O resurrection body, young, radiant, vibrant, free, with powers unthought, undreamed of. How rich your joys shall be as Margaret Clarkson says in that fine hymn we sang.

[11 : 13] Perishable to imperishable. Dishonour to glory. Now dishonour probably means our fallenness. The fact that although we are in the image of God, that image has been spoiled.

Our bodies let us down, don't they, all the time? Don't they? Whether you're young or old, your bodies let you down sooner or later. You, I mean, if you get older you realise that even more so.

My mind tells me I'm one age, much, much younger than I really am. My body won't let me away with that. That's what happens. Sown in dishonour, raised in glory, young, radiant, vibrant, free, through endless years to marvel, design, create, explore.

Sown in weakness, the inevitable decay, illness, and finally death. Raised in power, the power that raised Jesus from the dead.

We'll look at next week. Sown a natural body, raised a spiritual body. Natural body, because we belong to Adam, we'll come to that in a moment, and then raised a spiritual body.

[12 : 25] Now, as Christian people, we have the Spirit within us as the guarantee, as the anticipation of the life to come. In a sense, what happens on resurrection day is almost as if the Spirit hands us over and says, look, Father, the work's done.

The task is completed, we are like Christ, raised, sown natural, raised spiritual. So, Paul says, look at creation, look at the sky, look at the earth, look at the sky.

All this is going to happen, and happen irreversibly at creation. Then secondly, in verses 45 to 49, he says, look at history. Now, these are the big themes of the scriptures, creation and history.

He especially takes the bookends of history, if you like. He sees history, the whole sweep of history, in terms of two representative men, Adam and Christ.

Adam and Christ. We are in Adam because we are human. Adam, he says, the first man, Adam, became a living being.

[13 : 33] That's going back into the story in Genesis 2 where God created Adam out of the dust of the ground and then breathed his spirit into him. And Adam became a living being.

and that's, and that remained after the fall, although death came in then. Now, but Christ, by his resurrection, the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

Now, that's important. Adam was life-receiving. Adam had no life in himself. Adam could not create life any more than we can create life. Even so-called test your babies, that's not really creating.

I'm not talking about the ethics at the moment. I'm talking about the actual science, if you like. You can't just, you can't just take a test tube and say, let there be a baby. You have to use the material God has given.

We do not create, we cannot create, we are life-receiving, but Christ is life-giving. And verse 46 shows there is, we cannot break the secret, not the spiritual of this verse, but the natural.

[14 : 40] In other words, we're not born children of God. We have to be born again as children of God. You're not a child of God simply because you are born into the world.

That makes you a child of Adam, a child of a fallen race. We become children of God by receiving life from Christ through his spirit.

We can't help being in Adam. We were born that way, but only in the last day we'll be fully like Christ. And because we're in Adam, we sin and we will eventually die.

But because if we are in Christ, we will eventually triumph over death. And the result will be, we will be fully in his image.

Verse 49, just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

[15 : 36] As I say, we still have the image of God. that is why people, there's still a lot of good things in the world. People are very generous, people are very kind, people are very intelligent, people are very creative and so on.

These all are the image of God. But people are also very selfish, people are lazy, people are all of us. We are, we show the family likeness to Adam, a likeness which will lead to death.

death. But, the transformation, which is, and verse 49 leads us to the final section we'll look at next week, where the theme is transformation.

Because we are in Christ, we will be transformed. Apostle John says, we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, as we shall see him as he is.

He is the spirit in us, gradually works to make us more like Christ. It has to be said, he does have his work cut out, doesn't he? Because so often we resist him, so often we grieve him, so often we quench him.

[16 : 49] But, when that day comes, when we look at Christ, we will be like him. I don't know what that means. Neither do you. It's a wonderful, amazing, amazing reality which we'll only know on that day.

So if you're not a Christian, see what you're missing out on. You're missing out on this wonderful transformation, this glorious answer to all the sins and inadequacies and weakness of this mortal life and this mortal body.

If you are a Christian, especially if you shudder as you look in the mirror, and you feel your body isn't all that wonderful and is not really doing or being what it used to be, think of the prospect.

The prospect is not some disembodied existence in a shadow land, floating on clouds, something far more glorious than that. The Lord Jesus Christ, when he comes, will change our lowly bodies to be like his glorious body.

Being like Christ. Not of course, that's not talking about that we'll all look alike, I mean that's not a particularly attractive prospect, is it?

[18 : 13] But that we will, what God, in other words, will be what God created us to be. Fully, not just in mind and in spirit, but in body.

And that is something to thank God for. And that is something to look forward to. Amen. Let's pray. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

Father, we pray that as we live our lives in these days, in these difficult and perplexing days, that these glorious truths, these glorious realities of what we will be, what is not yet seen, will transform us day by day into the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ, who died, who was buried, but who rose again and ascended and will one day return in power and glory.

We thank you for this glorious gospel, for its wonder, for its blessings in the present and even greater blessings in the future. And pray that we will live as citizens of that country to which we are going.

And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.