

I CORINTHIANS: HANDLING BELIEVERS' PRACTICAL PROBLEMS

XVII. Adhering To Belief In The Bodily Resurrection, 1 Corinthians 15:1-58

D. Explaining The Rapture Of Living Christians

(1 Corinthians 15:50-58)

I. Introduction

- A. The people Paul disciplined in Corinth lived in a city that was known for its immorality, alcoholism and worldly pursuits (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, "Introduction to the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians: The City of Corinth," p. 1619), so the formidable influence of the city's culture on the Corinthian believers left Paul addressing "(a)berrant beliefs and practices of an astonishing variety" in his letters to them, *Ibid*.
- B. However, in a vision Paul received from God as he ministered at Corinth in Acts 18:10b NIV, God told him, "I have many people in this city," so Paul was to keep on ministering regardless of the trials he faced there.
- C. After explaining the resurrection of Christians who die in 1 Corinthians 15:35-49, in 1 Corinthians 15:50-58, Paul taught what would occur to living Christians at the rapture. We view this passage for our insight:

II. Explaining The Rapture Of Living Christians, 1 Corinthians 15:50-58.

- A. Paul's readers who denied belief in the resurrection would understand his explanation of the resurrection of the believer's body as a miraculous work of God, but that explanation raised the question of what would occur to the body of living true Christians at Christ's coming. (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 545)
- B. The apostle thus built on what he had stated in 1 Corinthians 15:35-49: as the natural body that was corrupted by the effects of sin would give way to the spiritual body in the Christian's resurrection, we understand that flesh and blood of the natural body corrupted by sin cannot enter the eternal state, 1 Corinthians 15:50; *Ibid*.
- C. Therefore, God has a special plan for what would occur to the natural bodies of still living Christians at Christ's coming, what had been a previously unknown truth in the Old Testament as a "mystery" but was now being revealed to the Corinthians by Paul, 1 Corinthians 15:51a; *Ibid*.
- D. That truth is the rapture of living Christians in the Church, and Paul described it in 1 Corinthians 15:51b-57:
 - 1. Though some Christians will physically die, which state is euphemistically referred to as "sleep" since it is a temporary state for Christians, not all Christians will die, 1 Corinthians 15:51b.
 - 2. Instead, at Christ's coming at the rapture, living Christians will all be changed, 1 Corinthians 15:51c.
 - 3. This change will occur in an instant at the "last trump," 1 Cor. 15:52a,b. [Some teach this trumpet is the last of the 7 trumpets that sounds in Revelation 11:15, but Revelation 11:15 states that that 7th trumpet sounds near Christ's Second Coming to earth to set up His kingdom, not when He takes believers to heaven to be with Him there as at the rapture in John 14:1-3. Thus, in 1 Corinthians 15:52, Paul alluded to the Numbers 10:1-10 practice where the people of Israel were led by trumpet sounds to move in their wilderness journeys. The "last trump" of 1 Corinthians 15:52 is God's call of His people in the Church for their last move in this life, their move to heaven. (J. D. Pentecost, Things To Come, 1972, p. 188-192.)]
 - 4. When this last trumpet for the Church sounds, physically dead believers will be raised in incorruptible bodies, and we who are alive will see our bodies changed into incorruptible ones, 1 Corinthians 15:52c-53.
 - 5. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 adds that resurrected believers will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and we who are alive and changed will then be caught up to meet them and the Lord in the air, and according to Jesus in John 14:1-3, we all will then proceed with the Lord back to heaven to be with Him there.
 - 6. In 1 Corinthians 15:54-57, Paul with thanksgiving to God referred to the blessing that Christians will experience at the rapture when their natural bodies affected by sin and corruption put on incorruption without sin, when death is swallowed up in victory in fulfillment of Isaiah 25:8 so that we will never again experience the presence or the effects of sin and death!
- E. Accordingly, Paul admonished his beloved spiritual brothers in Christ to stand firm, letting nothing move them from their confident hope in the rapture, that they always give themselves fully to the Lord's work since they knew that their labor was not in vain in the Lord due to their glorious destiny, 1 Corinthians 15:58.

Lesson: *Where dead believers in Christ will be resurrected in incorruptible bodies, we living believers will be changed from our present bodies into incorruptible, glorified bodies and taken by God to heaven in the rapture.*

Application: *In view of our glorious destiny of being with God in heaven without the presence or corruptible effects of sin, may we stay firmly committed to the Lord's calling for us in this life, for our existence does not end with physical death, cf. 1 Corinthians 15:19. Our destiny is eternal glory, so we should be motivated to act like it!*