

1 CORINTHIANS: MOVING FROM THE CARNAL TO THE SPIRITUAL STATE

Part XXXIX: Understanding The Believer's Resurrection Body

(1 Corinthians 15:35-49)

I. Introduction

- A. The Jehovah's Witnesses cult claims Jesus ascended to heaven apart from the body He sacrificed on the cross, so they deny the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. (Jan Karel Van Baalen, The Chaos of Cults, 1973, p. 269)
- B. However, a former professor at the Trinity Evangelical Divinity School has taught a view close to that, for he claimed Christ's body at His resurrection was transformed into a spiritual body without flesh and bones, that Jesus only occasionally materialized after His resurrection for apologetic reasons. (Robert D. Culver, A Wakeup Call, 1993, p. 101, citing a Christian Research Institute statement by Dr. Walter R. Martin) This view was eventually publicly countered by nearly three-dozen Christian groups, Ibid., Culver, p. 63.
- C. We thus need to know whether the resurrection body is the same one that dies but is reconstituted, or whether it is unrelated to the body that dies, or some other view, and 1 Corinthians 15:35-49 provides us the answer:

II. Understanding The Believer's Resurrection Body, 1 Corinthians 15:35-49.

- A. After his long argument in defense of the resurrection, Paul anticipated the question by those who denied it as to how dead believers were possibly raised and with what body they might have, 1 Corinthians 15:35.
- B. Such questions did not originate in wisdom, so Paul reacted to these questions with the admonition, "Thou fool!" (1 Cor. 15:36a) He clarified that God's work to raise the dead can be likened to the incomprehensible process in nature of the transformation of a seed that is sown to "die" much like a human body that is "sown" in death in the grave that results in the "resurrection" of the living plant from the dead seed, 1 Cor. 15:36b-37.
- C. God gives the resurrected party a body as it pleases Him, and to each kind of seed that is sown in "death" its own unique "resurrection" body that sprouts out of the dead seed, 1 Corinthians 15:38. In effect, then, Paul denied both extreme errors regarding the resurrection: (1) he denied that the resurrected body is the same physical body that dies but is only resuscitated, (2) and he denied that the resurrected body is totally unrelated to the body that is sown in death (as in the beliefs of the Jehovah's Witnesses or the former T. E. D. S. prof.). The resurrection body, like a seed sown in nature, is related to what is sown, but it is formatted differently.
- D. Paul continued to explain that just like there are different kinds of bodies in the natural realm -- bodies of men, animals, fishes and birds, so there are heavenly bodies as well as earthly bodies, 1 Cor. 15:39-40 NIV.
- E. Then, among even the heavenly bodies there are differences in glory: the glory of the sun, moon and stars differ from each other, and even the stars differ in glory from one another, 1 Corinthians 15:41.
- F. Paul then applied all this information to the believer's resurrection, 1 Corinthians 15:42-49 (as follows):
 1. The believer's natural body is sown in death in corruption, but it is raised incorruptible, 1 Cor. 15:42.
 2. The body is sown in death in dishonor, but it is raised in glory, 1 Corinthians 15:43a.
 3. The believer's body is sown in death in weakness, but it is raised in power, 1 Corinthians 15:43b.
 4. The body is sown in death as a natural body, but it is raised as a spiritual body, 1 Corinthians 15:44.
 5. Paul continued to contrast the earthly body we believers inherited from Adam with the spiritual body we obtain through the Second Adam, Jesus Christ in 1 Corinthians 15:45-49.
- G. For greater clarity, we know from 1 John 3:2 that we will share the likeness of Christ's resurrection body, so examining His resurrected body from Scriptural descriptions of it gives us insight into our resurrection bodies:
 1. As with our current bodies, our resurrected bodies (a) will have flesh and bone (Luke 24:39), (b) they will be the same bodies, seen in Jesus' retaining the wounds of His pre-death crucifixion in His hands and feet and in the post-death spear wound to His side (Luke 24:40; John 20:24-27), and (c) our resurrected bodies will be able to ingest food and drink. (Luke 24:42-43; Matthew 26:29)
 2. Yet, unlike our current bodies, (a) our resurrection bodies will be able to materialize or dematerialize (Luke 24:31, 36), (b) to survive on earth, in space or in heaven (Acts 1:9-11), (c) to appear in unglorified (Luke 24:15-35) or glorified forms (Acts 9:3-5 with Daniel 12:2-3), (d) they will be asexual (Mark 12:25) and (e) they will not experience fatigue, sleep, grief, pain, aging or death. (Revelation 21:4, 25)

Lesson: Christ's resurrection body, the template for the believer's resurrection body, is the same body the believer has in this earthly life, but it is reformatted by God into a spiritual, incorruptible, powerful, glorious body!

Application: May we hold to the bodily resurrection of Christ, and also to the bodily resurrection of the believer in the likeness of Christ's own resurrection body!