

**Introduction:**

- A. **Someone hearing for the first time that the dead will be raised—physically—from the grave could easily picture something from a horror movie—like “The Night of the Living Dead”.** Corpses climbing out of graves—ghastly and ghostly. Or maybe zombies of some kind, frightening shadows of what they had once been. No thank you! I suspect most people imagine immortality, but very few (apart from Christians) imagine the resurrection of our bodies. After all, if these bodies are a pain *before* we die, they are surely not going to be an asset *after* we die! Some people, imagining the afterlife, picture themselves with bodies, but I don't think they figure out how that body they're imagining would get there.
- B. We've been studying the Bible's most important chapter on the resurrection, 1 Cor. 15. Among the Christians in that ancient Greek city there were some who could not imagine the resurrection of the body to be a good thing. In **v.35** Paul repeats what he's heard. You have to read this question dripping with skepticism. *“But someone may ask, ‘How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?’”* They were picturing something out of “The Night of the Living Dead.” And Paul's response is, to put it in the vernacular, *“That's really stupid!” “How foolish!”*
- C. Paul has already in this chapter established that Jesus Christ literally rose from the dead and appeared to many different people, and that everything we believe as Christians rests on that historical event. Now he turns his attention from Christ's resurrection to *our* resurrections. What will our bodies be like when they rise from the dead. In the interest of time, I'll have to divide up the rest of this chapter into a couple of parts, but Paul is driving toward the statement he makes in **v.50**: *“I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.”* In other words, you cannot get into heaven wearing what you're wearing. That old body of yours just will not do! **We absolutely must have the resurrected bodies God promises if we want to live in the heavenly kingdom that awaits us.** Now let's track Paul's argument. He begins in the flower bed: **vv.36-38...**

**I. OUR MORTAL BODIES ARE THE SEEDS OF THE BODIES GOD WILL GIVE US (15:36-38)**

- A. To begin with, God won't raise our corpses, but our corpses are involved. To understand how the resurrection works look at what happens when we plant seeds. Illus.: Here in my hand I have a tulip bulb.
- Is it a tulip? *Not exactly.*
  - So over here I have a tulip. It's beautiful, isn't it? Where did it come from? *From a bulb.*
  - How did that happen? *The bulb was planted—buried—in the ground and then the flower grew from it.*
  - If I just stood here, holding this bulb, long enough would it turn into a tulip? *No, it has to be buried in the ground.*
  - Well, couldn't God just make a tulip like this without the bulb? *Yes, I'm sure he could, but he doesn't do it that way.*

These mortal bodies carry our essence—our souls, our lives—and when these mortal bodies are buried God draws that essential part of us up into the new bodies he will give us, the way DNA and life flow from the bulb to the flower. You will still be you when God gives you a new body, because he draws the 'you' in this mortal seed of your body into the 'you' in the immortal flower of your resurrection body.

Now he takes that another step: **vv.39-41...**

## II. GOD ALWAYS CREATES BODIES SPLENDIDLY SUITED TO THEIR ENVIRONMENTS (15:39-41)

- A. Look at anything in nature and see how God has perfectly suited it for its environment. Darwinists say things evolved to their environment—and I don't doubt that in smaller ways, that happens (microevolution). But we believe it was God who created the fish for the sea and birds for the air. We believe God set the sun in its place at just the right distance from the earth to sustain life here. Likewise, the moon at just the right place to pull the rhythmic tides.
- B. Not only does God create all these various bodies to fit their environments, but he gives each of them their own unique splendor. And part of that splendor is *because* they fit their environment. Among the splendors of fish is that they can breathe under water. Bears can sleep through cold winters. Butterflies can fly thousands of miles. When God shapes the bodies you and I as Christians will have in heaven, those bodies, springing from the seed of these bodies, will be perfectly and splendidly suited for that new and extraordinary environment.
- C. Another reason it is stupid to think that resurrection means that this body will crawl out of the grave is that God always suits bodies to their environments, and we need bodies suited to the environment of heaven. And whenever God does that, anywhere in nature, he always does it in amazingly beautiful and creative ways. Our new bodies will be perfectly suited for a new world where life never ends, where all live in the immediate presence of Almighty God, where our constant purpose is to serve him in all kinds of ways—even reigning over cities, where we enjoy to the full a perfect creation, and live in selfless service of every other citizen of that kingdom. The bodies God gives us, growing out of the seeds of these mortal bodies, will be perfectly suited for such a world as that!

## III. SO THE BODY THEY BURY WILL NOT BE LIKE THE BODY GOD RAISES (15:42-43)

Paul now stops talking in pictures and summarizes his point with four contrasts: **vv.42-43...** Here is a glimpse of our new bodies. Here is the reason why we have the promise that, *“There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”*

- A. “The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable” (v.42). These bodies are destined to deteriorate and decay. But *“when we’ve been **there** ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun, we’ve no less days to sing God’s praise than when we first begun.”* There’s an old gospel song that says, *“Never grow old, O we’ll never grow old, There’s a land where we’ll never grow old.”* Imperishable!
- B. “It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory” (v.43a). No matter how great a person has been, his/her corpse is embarrassing. And no there is no embalmer’s skill so great as to change that! But our resurrection bodies will be glorious. I can hardly grasp that I will have a glorious body! They will be beautiful to see, they will have extraordinary dignity and grace and capacities. Those bodies will be ready and willing to do anything our Christlike minds can conceive. Whatever comes to your mind in heaven to do your new body will say,, *“I can do that! I’m ready!”* Our new bodies will be at home in the presence of God’s glory.
- C. “It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power” (v.43b). Weakness is already upon us, and in the end, we will be utterly helpless. But when God raises us, our bodies will be powerful. Not just Samson-strong, but Christ-strong; bodies unhindered, minds quick and curious (and knowing); energetic with a kind of holy zeal. Not just big muscles, but mighty wills and hearts and minds.
- D. “It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body” (v.44). Language limits us here. The literal translation of the first phrase would be something like *“it is sown a body with a soul,”* and the second, *“it is raised as a body with a spirit.”* That only makes it harder! I think the sense is that now, the landlord of your body is your soul. Then the landlord of your body will be God’s Spirit. You will still have your soul, but it will be God’s Spirit who completely owns and moves you, with your soul as the happy tenant.

The Holy Spirit is already in residence in the Christian’s body, of course. In fact, the Bible says that the Holy Spirit within us is God’s deposit for what we one day shall be. But God’s Spirit within us must always contend with the earthiness, the worldliness, of our souls. I appreciated something **David Prior**

wrote on this. He said, *“Even now God’s Spirit dwells in our mortal bodies: but the more the Spirit makes us like Jesus, the more these mortal bodies groan under the strain of anticipating their own demise and the freedom of totally new bodies designed for glory and power.”* Then he explains, *“The first body has all the limitations of our earthiness; the second body has all the capacity of God’s Spirit”* [p.274]. That takes us to this:

#### IV. CHRIST, THE SECOND ADAM, GUARANTEES US HEAVEN-READY BODIES (15:45-49)

The argument in vv.45-49 is an appeal, you might say, to spiritual genetics. Paul expands on that statement in **v.44...** We inherited these bodies from Adam, but when we put our faith in Christ, we are born again. We are born of the Spirit. We are born with the spiritual DNA of our new Adam, Christ. That’s what’s behind these next statements. Let me highlight two things:

- A. From the last Adam we inherit fresh breath (vv.45-46). Gen. 2 says God breathed into Adam the breath of life and he came to life. But now we need a better Adam than that. We need a new Adam who can breathe into us not only breath that animates a body formed from the dust of the earth, but a body poisoned to death by sin. And that is what we have in Christ—the last Adam.

**The first Adam, you might say, was a *breath-ee***, someone who breathed life from God. But our sin has given us a kind of spiritual emphysema. We find it more and more difficult to breath—to live. **The last Adam, Jesus Christ, once he rose from the grave, was a *breath-er***—he was the *“life-giving Spirit”*—the *life-giving Breath*. The risen Christ is the very one who breathes with God’s own Spirit. And that is the kind of life our new bodies will have.

Have you ever thought about this? When Jesus rose from the dead he didn’t need our air to breathe. He may have breathed, but he didn’t need oxygen to live, any more than he needed the meal of fish his disciples gave him to be strong. The living Spirit of God—the Breath of God—within him was his new oxygen. When he ascended into heaven, he did not gasp as he rose higher and the oxygen got thinner. His life’s breath did not come from the atmosphere around him but from the Spirit/Breath within him. That is what you can expect with the new body you will receive! **That’s why I say, from the last Adam we get fresh breath!**

- B. **Vv.47-49...** From the last Adam we inherit heaven-ready bodies. God told Adam, *“For dust you are, and to dust you will return.”* But it is not so for the Adam from heaven. I do not know what substance that resurrected body is made from, but it is most certainly not dust! And whatever wonderful new matter made up Christ’s body—matter that could pass through walls, yet enjoy food; matter that could walk, yet rise into the air; matter that could take on the disguise of an ordinary man and yet shine like the sun—whatever that matter is, is what our bodies will be like in heaven. Bodies that are imperishable, glorious, powerful and breathing with the Spirit of God.

#### Conclusion

We don’t think enough about the bodies God will give us at the resurrection. All we care about is that they won’t be *these* bodies! But bodies are important to God. The human body is God’s own creation, and he will create for us bodies that are perfectly suited to our heavenly home.

Here is yet another reason to put our faith in Christ. This passage doesn’t tell us what it will be like for those who do not put their faith in Christ. We are told that they, too, will be raised, but not with such bodies as we’ve learned of today. They will not have bodies that are imperishable, glorious, powerful and Spirit-breathing. They will die forever. If this body is a pain, whatever form that body is in will be worse. That really will be the eternal “night of the living dead.”

I heard Joni Eareckson Tada, who has lived many years as a quadriplegic, say, *“Don’t assume that all I ever do is dream about springing out of this wheelchair, jumping up, dancing, kicking, doing aerobics. No I’m looking forward to heaven because of a new heart, a heart free of sin, sorrow, selfishness. That beats having a*

*new body any day.*"<sup>i</sup> That surely is particularly wonderful—to think of perfect hearts. But what is so great is that God will give us new, glorious bodies suitable for hearts so righteous!

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<sup>i</sup> Gaither CD, *Heaven*, track 1