

Lesson 23  
1 Corinthians 15:35-58  
The Resurrection of the Body

INTRODUCTION:

1. In Acts 23:6 Paul declared, "I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees: touching the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.
2. Paul here expressed the hope of a bodily resurrection (dead, a word that does not apply to the soul), a hope that has sustained man through the ages of time.
  1. Job, from the agony of a decaying body could cry, "If a man die, shall he live *again*? All the days of my warfare would I wait, Till my release should come. 15 Thou wouldest call, and I would answer thee: Thou wouldest have a desire to the work of thy hands. Job 14:14-15.
    1. As his condition worsened his hope deepened.
    2. But as for me I know that my Redeemer liveth, And at last he will stand up upon the earth: 26 And after my skin, *even* this *body*, is destroyed, Then without my flesh shall I see God; Job. 19:26-26.
  2. When David was compassed about by the wicked, lurking secretly as greedy lions of prey, his hope of a resurrection defied the temporal threat, "As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with *beholding* thy form." Psalm 17:15.
  3. In the N.T. Jesus held forth this hope in unmistakable terms.
    1. Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs (only bodies) shall hear his voice, 29 and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment. John 5:28-29.
    2. Yet a little while, and the world beholdeth me no more; but ye behold me: because I live, ye shall live also. John 14:19.
  4. Paul could affirm in the midst of persecution and imminent martyrdom, "For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens. 2 For verily in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven:" 2 Cor. 5:1-5; Rom. 8:23.
2. Others in Paul's day and in our own are not restricted by or impressed with the evidence.
  1. The ancient Greeks disdained the idea of bodily resurrection.
    1. They did not welcome the idea of receiving a body again in the afterlife.
    2. They desired to be free of their own corruptibility.
    3. They wanted to be free of their physical body.
      1. This view was reflected by:
        1. Celsus, who responded to the idea of resurrection, "The soul may have everlasting life, but corpses, as Heraclitus said, 'ought to be thrown away as worse than dung.'"
        2. Plutarch similarly said it was "against nature" to "send bodies to heaven" and that only pure souls "cast no shadows" (*i.e.*, had no bodies).
        3. The funeral pyre was said to burn away the body so that the immortal part could ascend to the gods."
    2. When the Gnostics appeared in the church, they carried this prejudice over into their theology, saying that there will be no actual physical or bodily resurrection because,

- according to them, flesh was intrinsically evil.
1. They reasoned that since God is good, he would not wish something evil (another body) on his children.
  2. They therefore believed in a spirit form as the final state of the righteous.
  3. The Sadducees denied a bodily resurrection. Mt. 22:23; Acts 23:6-8.
3. Moderns.
1. Atheists -- contradiction of scientific natural knowledge.
  2. Religious modernism -- denies resurrection thro demythologizing the scripture.
  3. Cults.
    1. Jehovahs Witnesses.
      1. The incorrigibly wicked "will never be remembered for resurrection." (Make Sure of All Things, p. 314.)
      2. Jesus was raised a glorious spirit creature, but not in fleshly body. His body was dissolved into gasses.
      3. 144,000 -- will copy Jesus in every detail (re-creation or copy of original personality).
      4. Great Multitude -- live on renewed earth, recreation of both body and personality from the memory of God.
    2. New Agers -- reincarnation.
    3. Some who claim to be a part of the N.T. church -- Max Kingism, A.D. 70 doctrine.
      1. Aligned with Hymenaeus and Philetus -- 2 Tim. 2:17-18.
      2. Claim the resurrection was spiritually effected in A.D. 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem.
    4. Some in Corinth had the same problem. Now if Christ is preached that he hath been raised from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? 1 Cor. 15:12.
    5. Paul addressed all of these heresies in 1 Cor. 15.

**BODY: THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY -- 1 Cor. 15.**

1. The resurrection of the body is a verifiable event. I Cor. 15:1-11.
  1. Paul's first point is that we know that Christ arose from the dead in a resurrected body.
    1. Since this is a recent historical event no one has the right to say that a bodily resurrection is either impossible or undeniable.
    2. It is interesting to note that Paul even considered his Damascus-road experience as a valid personal encounter with the risen Christ, not a mere vision.
  2. Faced with the evidence, the deniers of the bodily resurrection had no basis upon which to rest their argument.
    1. They lived too close to the time of Christ's bodily resurrection to effectively deny it.
    2. There were too many people around who could testify that they had seen the risen Lord.
    3. They simply could not explain away this great historical event any more than some today can deny the reality of the Holocaust.
2. The Belief in the Christian's Bodily Resurrection is a Crucial Belief. 1 Cor. 15:12-19, 29-34.
  1. Paul makes it clear that a person who does not believe in the bodily resurrection of believers, no matter what the reason, is invalidating the entire gospel message.

2. Paul wanted the Corinthians to see the serious nature of their error.
  1. They thought that they could deny a future bodily resurrection and still retain the basic elements of the gospel -- forgiveness of sin, the power of the Gospel, the resurrection of Christ in some sense, and victory over sin and death.
  2. Paul told them that their denial tore down every foundation of salvation through Jesus Christ.
  3. In fact, if the gospel only lasts until life ends it's a bad bargain -- we are of all men most to be pitied. 15:19.
  4. In v. 32 he adds, If the gospel is not true there is no basis for hope -- eat and drink for tomorrow we die.
3. This suggests another reason why belief in the resurrection is so crucial.
  1. When they abandoned faith in the resurrection they abandoned other important teachings of scripture as well -- they began to go back to their old pagan way of life and even became involved in immorality.
  2. Paul's warning to them was 1 Cor. 15:33-34: Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals. 34 Awake to soberness righteously, and sin not; for some have no knowledge of God: I speak *this* to move you to shame.
  4. Faith in the resurrection is a matter of life and death -- deny it and you have no salvation or hope.
3. The Christian's bodily resurrection is a personal continuation. 1 Cor. 15:35-38.
  1. In resurrection we will still be who we are now.
    1. This is so much better than what the New Agers offer in their reincarnation doctrine.
    2. They hope to come back as new individuals.
    3. The Scripture assures us that in heaven we will remember and recognize.
    4. The very fact that we will stand at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10) and be judged according to what we have done in the body clearly indicates that we will still be who we are now, and that we will remember what we did during our earthly pilgrimage.
  2. In verses 35-38 Paul made two key points -- the principle of continuity and the concept of diversity, the difference that shall characterize each of our resurrection bodies.
    1. The principle of continuity was illustrated in the seed.
      1. We take a kernel of corn or a sunflower seed and plant it in the soil.
      2. In the ground it decays, but it springs forth as a plant.
      3. The kernel of corn becomes a cornstalk; the sunflower seed becomes a sunflower plant.
      4. When people die, their bodies will decay.
      5. But when Christ comes, these bodies will come to life again.
      6. We will all be the same people we were on earth -- there is continuity.
    2. Yet there is diversity -- the difference between the body that we now have and the body that we shall then have may be as great as the difference between the corn kernel and the cornstalk.
      1. Paul hinted at the fact that each resurrection body will have an element of individuality when he declared that God gives to each seed its own body.
      2. We will retain our personal identity.
      3. We will be who we are even though the new body will be as different from the one we have now as a seed is from the plant it produces.

4. We will not be a carbon copy of someone else; we will be a unique person in every sense of the term.
4. The Christian's bodily resurrection is a new beginning. 1 Cor. 15:39-49.
  1. While we will still be the people we were when we lived on earth, we will begin a brand new existence; in our earthly bodies we sinned, suffered, and endured humiliation. No more! We will have a new splendor; we will enjoy a new perfection; we will be designed to live in a new environment.
  2. Our resurrection bodies will have a new splendor. 1 Cor. 15:39-42.
    1. He didn't describe them.
    2. Human language can't adequately describe heavenly and eternal realities.
    3. As William Barclay said, that is "trying to express the inexpressible and to describe the indescribable."
    4. Human language can only speak in generalities, using terms that mean something to us.
    5. Paul therefore pointed to the varieties of flesh on earth to tell us that the same God who created these varieties can create a superior kind of flesh for us.
    6. Maybe Paul's reference to the many kinds of flesh on earth hints at the thought that our resurrection bodies will have flesh with such splendor that we will be able to do things we can't even dream of doing today.
    7. Think of what Jesus did. 1 Cor. 15:20; Rev. 1:18.
      1. 2 Cor. 5:1-3; 1 John 3:2; Phil 3:21.
      2. What characterized Christ's resurrection body?
        1. He could appear in closed rooms (John 20:19, 26).
        2. He could vanish from sight (Luke 24:31).
        3. He was recognized (Matt. 28:17; Luke 24:31; John 20:16, 20, 28; 21:12).
        4. He ate with the disciples (Luke 24:43).
        5. He urged them to see his hand and feet and to touch Him (Luke 24:39; John 20:27).
        6. He could traverse from earth to heaven at will.
  3. Our resurrection bodies will have a new perfection. 1 Cor. 15:42-43.
    1. Many people was obsessed today with physical fitness.
    2. Many businesses exist for no purpose other than to provide a place to develop the perfect body.
    3. Body building magazines encourage and illustrate the development of the perfect body.
    4. But after spending all of that time and money, nobody has one.
    5. The bodies in which we live carry within them the seeds of death.
      1. They are subject to disabling diseases and accidents.
      2. They can't match those of many animals in endurance or strength.
      3. The cost of medical care gives eloquent testimony to this truth.
      4. Professional athletes peak out at about 30.
      5. With all of our medicines few live beyond the century mark.
  4. Our resurrection body will have a new design. 1 Cor. 15:44-49.
    1. We now live in a body designed for earthly existence; the one that we will receive in the resurrection will be designed for heaven (sown a natural body; raised a spiritual body).
    2. Paul is not saying that the resurrection body will be composed entirely of spirit.
    3. Our spirits will be in perfect tune with God and His will.

4. Our body in heaven will respond perfectly to this redeemed spirit.
  5. In contrast, our present body is animated by and responds to earthly needs and desires (What better description than "natural"?).
  6. Paul went on to describe our future state. v. 49.
    1. Our first body bears the image of Adam; our resurrection body bears the image of the resurrected Christ.
    2. We will be perfectly designed for heaven because we will be just like our Savior.
5. The Christian's resurrection provides a life-changing hope. 1 Cor. 15:50-58.
1. Paul's discussion of the resurrection now reaches a magnificent climax.
    1. His heart is full.
    2. His mind is running in high gear.
    3. You can feel the pulse of excitement in his words.
  2. He begins by summarizing what he had been saying.
    1. The thought that the twin enemies of the human race -- sin and death -- will be totally conquered led Paul to use graphic imagery.
      1. Death is swallowed up in victory.
      2. Jesus Christ, through His death and resurrection, has so completely defeated death that, on that day in the future, death we be swallowed up.
      3. IT WILL BE GONE.
    2. After this exultant expression of resurrection triumph, Paul taunted death.
      1. O Death where is your sting? O Hades where is your victory?
      2. In our place Jesus Christ fulfilled the law and through his death he both paid the price for our sins and broke death's power.
      3. He won the victory over sin and death.
      4. And because he did, we can, and through him and in him, we will.
      5. We need have no fear in the face of death.
  3. Paul closed his climactic section with a practical appeal.
    1. He had been teaching.
    2. He had been praising God.
    3. From theology and praise he turned to exhortation in the form of a challenge -- v. 58.
    4. We have an indescribable glory to anticipate.
    5. In the light of this great expectation, we should persist in serving the Lord through thick and thin, gladly going beyond the call of duty.
    6. We can do this with the assurance that the reward will far outweigh the cost, no matter how deep the trial or how difficult the way.

#### CONCLUSION:

1. Paul tells us that he rejoiced in hope of the glory of God. Rom. 5:2.
  1. That is what we should do in response to such truths.
  2. Think of the glory and honor of the resurrection life.
2. 1 John 3:3 -- And every one that hath this hope *set* on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.