

## **“The Nature of the Resurrection Body”**

14 November 2021 - Led by Rev. Sam Mawhinney

### **Welcome & Call to Worship**

**Hymn of Preparation:** Christ Is The World's True Light

### **Act of Remembrance**

**Hymn:** The King Of Love

### **Prayers of Adoration & Confession**

**Reading:** 1 Corinthians 15:35-58

### **Sermon:**

#### **I. Change**

When we first came to ARPC Karen took photographs of everyone who came to the Manse as we began those who were there look very young. If you look at a photograph of yourself 5 or 10 years ago and of yourself today, you will see change. It proves the fact that we are perishable and literally we are decaying. However, you are still you.

Change can also be good! A Cathode Ray Tube TV in black and White (this was the first TV I watched) is not as good as a HD digital Smart TV. Change can improve.

One of the best and most transformative things I have ever done was the CCEF Biblical Counselling course “Dynamics of Biblical Change”. It helped me recognise personal sin rather than be stuck in defensive blame of others. With an application of the gospel we can change, sin overcome or weakened in areas of our lives, and the fruit of the Holy Spirit can be more evident. So, we become less defensive, less anxious, and more confident of the love of God. It's a good thing, it's an improvement. We become more like Jesus as our bodies weaken and decay. Yet our resurrection hope is that change in our earthly bodies will occur after death and we will be given a changed body one that is perfect and suited to eternal life. The nature of that body is outlined in our passage this morning. The Apostle Paul calls it our resurrection body.

The letter to the Church in Corinth is a corrective one because there was scepticism from some in the church over the fact of the resurrection of the body, which explains the introduction to our passage in v35-36! *How are the dead raised? What kind of a body will they come with?* With Paul's dismissal of such scepticism. *How foolish!* Paul is not dismissing the question, he answers it comprehensively in the following verses, but he is dismissive of the sceptical attitude that underlies it.

The world remains sceptical of the resurrection of the body. If I interpret what I often hear, most still believe in some form of spirit or soul resurrection, so that the person is up there, looking down, in the grave, with them, or free to roam. I have heard people say to me that they believe after death we are a free eternal spirit. This is a universal belief; however, it is not the Christian belief.

Many of us are concerned about what happens to our body after death. This question is most often seen in our thoughts about cremation and the scattering of ashes. What does God do with our bodies? There are lots of scenarios which trouble us; death at sea, being

blown up, our bodies being eaten by animals or by fish. We are generally much more comfortable with the idea of being buried in the ground.

These questions are not unimportant, they are not foolish! The dilemma is that we are straying into areas that are beyond our experience and our knowledge. Paul's brilliant argument is that we can start with what we do know and then apply that to what we do not know, so that we can live by faith with confidence and hope. Let us bring our questions, ideas and uncertainty to God as we look at this passage on the nature of the resurrection body.

## **II. Lessons from Nature**

### **A. Seeds (v35-38)**

We know about seeds (v37) it can be any seed. A sunflower seed looks like this, and the Sunflower looks like this. It has therefore two modes of existence. How does it transition or change? Firstly, it must die and for that to happen you must put it in the ground, cover it up and press the soil down. That principle makes no sense, but it is a fact and God has so designed it (v38) In fact we see a second idea emerge, the continuity between the two states, the seed and the plant. They do not look the same, in fact they are very different, but they share the same DNA and there is continuity. A sunflower seed becomes a sunflower not an apple tree.

We know that for a seed to change it must die, and we know that there is continuity between the seed and the plant.

### **B. Body types (v39-41)**

Paul illustrates two types of body. Animal and inanimate (specifically planetary) he calls them earthly and heavenly. It is common knowledge that chicken is different to fish and we know from science that planets have different characteristics, and we recognise those differences, the gentle light of the moon and the bright light of the sun, for example. These differences are described as splendour or glory. So, the difference in bodies is self-evident and the reason for the difference is their glory. The chicken dies in water, the fish thrives, the sun heats and gives light to our planet, the moon reassures us in its melancholy light.

### **C. The resurrection body (v42-44)**

Then v42 states a remarkable truth, so it will be with the resurrection body. Meaning, it will be seen after death, though it is hidden within us, it is given by God, and will have continuity with our earthly body and it will be perfect for the glory of heaven.

Paul presses home his argument by naming the differences between the earthly (natural) and heavenly (spiritual).

- Sown perishable raised imperishable.
- Sown in dishonour raised in glory
- Sown in weakness raised in power
- Sown natural raised spiritual

## **III. Theology (v44-49)**

Paul will conclude this argument in v50 but before he does so, he wants to anchor these thoughts not only in nature illustrations but in theology. He contrasts Adam / Jesus Christ calling Adam the first man and Jesus the last Adam. (v45)

- The first Adam became a living being (psyche-soul)
- The last Adam (Jesus Christ) a life-giving spirit (pneuma-spirit)

Paul highlights the order (v46) natural first and spiritual second

- The first Adam came from the dust of the earth (earthly man)
- The last Adam (Jesus Christ) from heaven (heavenly man)

Just as we have borne the likeness of Adam, so in Jesus we bear the likeness of the man from heaven. (v48-49)

The conclusion boldly stated is, *“I tell you the truth, brothers and sisters, flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.”* (v50)

Some within the Corinthian Church believed they had already reached a resurrection state, then says Paul, you are mistaken and cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, the natural body must be changed. God can do that he has already done that in Jesus Christ and he will do it for all who are in Christ. (John Ch 21 Post resurrection appearances)

There is enough knowledge in the created world, a world God made to tell us he can make such a body and any scepticism about such ability is also foolish. Using the examples of a seed, different body types and the contrast between the first Adam and the last Adam, Jesus Christ, Paul shows that God can also cause total change in our bodies after death, gifting us a body wonderfully suited to the full presence of the Holy Spirit and able to live forever, imperishable, glorious, powerful and perfectly capable of housing the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Any foolish talk of our earthly body being able to be present in heaven and sustain such a life is absurd. Any belief that doesn't incorporate the wonder of bodily resurrection is also flawed and foolish. Our present body cannot exist in the Kingdom of God, it is not equipped to do so, it is in a process of decay, it is finite, it is affected and prone to sin, it is perishable, dishonoured, and weak. So, it must be changed!

#### **IV. The moment of change (v51-58)**

Hopefully you are curious about when that will happen, and the implications of that hope. Paul does not disappoint; he reveals this mystery (v51) You will remember that a mystery in the bible is not a puzzle or secret but something God alone knows and reveals.

*We will not all sleep (die) but we will all be changed (v51)* Paul is dealing with the fact that when Jesus comes back, some will obviously still be alive. Sleep is like death for the Christian, we are unaware of time, we awake refreshed, but of course this change will be infinitesimally greater. It will happen in a moment, a blink of an eye, and it will come as the last authoritative command of the Lord Jesus. (a trumpet call) So the dead and those who are still alive when Jesus comes back will be changed, they will be given a body that is imperishable and immortal and that is the moment when all dominion, authority and power and death will be swallowed up in victory. (v53-57) Their authority, their sting (v55-56) (like the deadly sting of a scorpion Rev 9:10) is defeated, overcome, with thanks is due to God and the victory of Jesus on the cross and resurrection. This is our certain hope.

#### **V. “Therefore . . .” (v58)**

**Stand firm:** Believe the truth of the resurrection, don't waver from that belief, from the creed handed down to the Apostle, Jesus died for our sins according to the scriptures, Jesus was buried, Jesus was raised on the third day, and he appeared to many. This is of first importance! Our culture, friends, Satan himself will try to move you from this truth, don't ever let that happen. *Let nothing move you.*

**Always, fully give yourselves to the work of the Lord.** Dear brothers and sisters, let those words resonate, feel their call, always, fully, give yourself to the work of the Lord, because you know that **your labour in the Lord is not in vain.**

The fact of the resurrection is an encouragement to faithful service of God. Faithful service in all of life, school, marriage, work, leisure, church. The words always and fully are wholehearted, words of devotion because of the enormity of what God has done for us. In English we might say we are "eternally grateful" when someone has done something of real value and benefit for us and we are prepared to give ourselves fully in their service. God is love, God is good, his will is perfect and pleasing, and the resurrection of our decaying bodies shows just how good and loving.

If like me you sense a conviction that you are an unprofitable servant, or your service has become distant and out of routine, then talk to God about that and repent. It is a feeling that Christians often feel. The hymn writer William Cowper Hymn, said it well in the hymn, O for a closer walk with God.

*1 O for a closer walk with God,  
a calm and heavenly frame,  
a light to shine upon the road  
that leads me to the Lamb!*

*2 Where is the blessedness I knew  
when first I sought the Lord?  
Where is the soul refreshing view  
of Jesus and His Word?*

*3 What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!  
How sweet their memory still!  
But they have left an aching void  
the world can never fill.*

*4 Return, O holy Dove, return,  
sweet messenger of rest;  
I hate the sins that made Thee mourn,  
and drove Thee from my breast.*

*5 The dearest idol I have known,  
whate'er that idol be,  
help me to tear it from Thy throne  
and worship only Thee.*

*6 So shall my walk be close with God,  
calm and serene my frame;  
so purer light shall mark the road  
that leads me to the Lamb.*

And the promise, and the proof given through the resurrection of Jesus, is that those who are in Christ will also be raised and given a changed resurrection body and now everything given to and done for the Lord Jesus is ever lost or wasted. Amen.

**Praise:** Thine Be The Glory

**Prayers for Others**

**Announcements**

**Closing Hymn:** Christ Triumphant, Ever Reigning

**Discussion Questions:**

Paul uses different creation realities to explain the resurrection body. What do they teach about the resurrection?

What happens to our bodies in death and when Jesus returns?

Reread v.53-58. What does Paul conclude and what is your response to what he says?