

Do you know what city was close to Corinth? Athens, Greece! So, some in the church in Corinth had been influenced by the way the Greeks viewed things.

In Acts 17, Paul was preaching over in Athens, and Paul said in Acts 17:31-32, that God “...*has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom He has appointed; and of this He has given assurance to all by raising Him from the dead.*” Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked.”

Paul was mocked for preaching about the resurrection, because the Greek philosophers questioned how resurrection is possible.

That brings us to the main point... **The answer to how the bodily resurrection of the dead is possible is the resurrection giver.**

### **1. Notice God’s patterns of botanical life out of death, and types of terrestrial bodies and celestial glories. (v. 35-41)**

In verse 35, Paul acknowledged that some questioned whether any physical body can be brought to life again, due to decay, or if the body had been burned or otherwise destroyed.

They were questioning two things 1) how the body could be raised back up in current decomposed condition of that body, or 2) how the body could be restored to the previous condition just prior to the person’s death.

In other words, what exactly is the make-up of a resurrection body?

Paul wrote surprisingly and strongly, “You foolish person!”

Why did Paul respond so strongly like this? Because they should have observed the created world all around them to know of God’s power.

In verse 36, Paul began to show from the realm of plants the re-start of life anew from something old, but in a different form. You plant a seed, and we can say that the seed dies, and at the time when the seed dies, the seed also gives birth to a new life in the form of a developing plant.

Paul here took a similar approach as Jesus did. In John 12, a group of Greeks came to Jesus and famously said, “*Sir, we wish to see Jesus.*” Because Jesus knew about the Greek belief system, listen to what Jesus said to the Greeks in John 12:24, “...*unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.*”

Both Jesus and Paul were making the same points about the ancient Greek errors of thinking. Greeks believed that the body is bad, and so dying is a good thing because death finally frees you from the prison of your bad body. The Greeks thought of a resurrection as taking possession again of your own rotting corpse! No wonder the Greeks did not like the idea of resurrection, because of the

falsehoods they were believing. They thought Paul was teaching something literally and figuratively with the stench of death.

It is genius that Jesus pointed people to a simple seed, and Paul used that same wise approach. Each seed – every kind from an acorn to a kernel of corn - shows that there is within the world that God created the ability for a seed to overcome its own burial by God’s power and God’s design. Just reflecting on that fact alone, should have opened the Greeks to the idea that human beings who are buried may overcome their own burial by God’s supernatural power and God’s eternal design.

In verse 37, Paul wrote, “*and what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain.*” So, if you want to plant an Oak tree, do you plant a teeny, tiny oak tree? No. what you plant is not the body that is to be. Instead, you plant the SEED of an oak tree, which we call an acorn. Another example, if you want to plant a row of corn, do you bury miniature corn plants, all in a row? No. You bury in a row the SEEDS of corn plants, which we call kernels.

That should lead the Greeks to a healthy question. How does that corn kernel or acorn know how to become the correct plant – one an oak tree, the other a corn plant? Paul answered that in the next verse, when Paul wrote about the buried seed, now growing into a young plant, that, “...*God gives it a body as He has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body.*” (v.38) Who governs the growth? God.

In verse 39, Paul made the point that, “*not all flesh is the same...*” Paul showed that God is capable of giving resurrected bodies to followers of Jesus Christ, by listing various natural objects in creation by which God demonstrates His ability to create different types of bodies -humans, land animals, birds of the air, and fish of the water.

In verse 40, Paul showed that the sky has heavenly bodies, and the land has earthly bodies. Both have glory from God, but they are different from each other. In verse 41, Paul explained that he was referring to the sun, the moon, the stars, and the various stars even differ from each other. What was Paul communicating? When we consider at all that God has created, we have to conclude that God had no difficulty coming up with shapes, sizes, and substances for each item in His universe.

We should not concern ourselves that perhaps the lack of an appropriate type of body for believers to inhabit will somehow impede the resurrection of believers from the dead! That brings us to our second point...

## **2. Understand the radical differences between the risen body and its earthly counterpart. (v.42-44a)**

Verse 42, we read, “*So is it with the resurrection of the dead.*” Our bodies are different now from how they will be when we are resurrected.

First, in verse 42, our mortal bodies are perishable, but that is not how it will be with our resurrected bodies. When we rise again, we get these same bodies back, but they will be changed. One of the ways that our bodies will be changed is that they will become, for the first time, imperishable. No more illness. No more death!

Second, in verse 43, our current bodies carry dishonor because of sin. We know that sin has corrupted our thinking and our beliefs, but Paul is showing that sin has also even corrupted our very bodies. Your body will live and die and be buried in dishonor, but later, your body will be “*raised in glory.*” Even your body, your resurrected body, will be glorious and splendid.

Third, which is also found in verse 43, our mortal bodies suffer weakness. We are subject to illness and death from many sources. In the resurrection, believers will join Christ in an unassailable reign. 2 Timothy 2:12, “*if we endure, we will also reign with [Christ].*”

And the fourth point about the difference between our bodies now and our future risen bodies will be that our mortal bodies are natural, but what is true about your body in the future is that your body will be “*raised a spiritual body.*” (v.44). This is not a contrast between physical and nonphysical. Christ had a resurrected body that, when He appeared to other people, Christ Jesus in His risen body continued to be physical and material. He broke bread, he cooked and distributed food, and the risen Lord Jesus ate fish. He allowed Thomas to touch his hands and side. However, the physical body of Jesus after the resurrection had new and special characteristics. He could appear suddenly inside a room with locked doors, and He was able to vanish just as quickly.

So, what does the term “Spiritual” mean, in the phrase spiritual body? It is a direct reference to the Spirit of God. We read in Romans 8:11, “*If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.*” We will have spiritual bodies, which means that we will be Spiritual, because our bodies will be renewed by the Holy Spirit.

The Spiritual body will not be a body that needs to eat and digest for energy, and needs to sleep for refreshment, but will live off the Spirit. The Spiritual body will be a body that has its life in the Spirit, and lives solely of the Spirit and by the Spirit. There may be some eating, such as Jesus after His resurrection ate a meal of fish, and there may be eating in heaven, such as when we enjoy the meal of the great feast of the Lamb, but our spiritual bodies will be fueled primarily by the Spirit. For further understanding, we advance to verses 44-49.

### **3. Consider how Christ will bridge the earthly and the heavenly. (v.44b-49)**

In Verse 44b, we read, “*If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual*

body.”

Paul supported this statement with 5 observations about Adam with 5 conclusions about Christ. So, the Adam to Christ comparison will help us to bridge our gap in understanding between our earthly body, like Adam’s and our heavenly body, like Christ’s.

In verse 45, “*Thus it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being.’*” This is Paul picking up a simple phrase from the Bible in Genesis 2:7, which is “Adam became a living being.” And Paul added two words ‘First man’ so that the whole phrase then became, “The first man Adam became a living being.” Since Paul is comparing Adam to Christ here, and what was true about the first man was that he became a living being, what was it that was even greater that must be true about Christ, and Christ’s body? In His resurrection, Christ Jesus became something even greater than a living being. Which is what? Not just that Christ was resurrected. It is more. What Christ became was a life-giving spirit. In other words, as much as Adam was a wonderful man able to transmit life to all of his offspring including ourselves by the ordinary process of human families, Adam was not as great as Jesus. Jesus was such a wonderful man that He is able to give eternal life to all who trust in Christ. And what was our condition? Dead in sin. So, Christ was able to give resurrection life to those who had been dead.

Please note the correlation between Christ and the Spirit here. Christ became the Spirit. That does not trouble us because we serve a God who is three persons and one God. The Spirit is the Spirit of the Father. The Spirit is also the Spirit of the Son. Christ’s Spirit giving us life is the same as saying Christ gives us life.

The second of these five observations is in verse 46, from the order of things, as they are listed in the Bible. The first thing is not the spiritual. We did not start out as spirits, and then God had to create a body for us. No, it is the other way around. God created a body for Adam. And then what? Genesis 2:7, “...*the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into His nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.*” So, the order of things is Paul’s observation for us. Which came first – Adam’s body or Adam’s soul? First came Adam’s natural body. This supports Paul’s contention that God will provide a body that is renewed by the Spirit for believers in the future resurrection.

The third of these five observations is in verse 47, the origin of Adam is different from the origin of Christ. Verse 47 reads, “*The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven.*” Adam reflected God’s glory because Adam was made in God’s image and Adam was an incredible being. But there remains something greater about Christ. Christ exceeded the glory that Adam had, because Christ was from heaven. In the Gospel of John 6:38, Jesus Himself said, “*I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.*” The observation of Paul here is that Christ came down from heaven.

The fourth of the five observations is in verse 48, “*As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven.*” Adam’s descendants will be like Adam. Yes, we are all humans like Adam. We inherit Adam’s natural physical nature. He is actually and literally our great-great grandfather. Great-great-great-great. You know. We call him our first grandparent. Or simply, our first parent. The Father from whom we all have been born.

Since that is true about us in our earthly body, what will be true about us for our resurrected body? Those who are of heaven, or those who are born from above in our regeneration, become like the man of heaven. We become like Christ. When this statement says “of heaven” referring to Christ as the man “of heaven” it is not focusing on the location of Christ’s origin. And it is not focusing on the location of Christ right now. Instead, Paul is referring directly to the nature of Christ. We the resurrected ones will inherit Christ’s spiritual nature, his heavenly nature.

The fifth of the five observations is in verse 49, “*Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.*” We bear the image of Adam. We share the likeness of the earthly man. Human beings have a certain look about us. We are not half-horse, like a centaur from the world of make-believe, and we are not half-fish like a mermaid also from the world of make-believe. Rather, we are fully humans in the real world. We are made in the image of God, but the Bible also teaches that we are made in the image of our human ancestors, back to Adam. Genesis 5:3, “*Adam...fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.*” What was Paul’s conclusion from this observation? That since it works this way on earth for your earthly body, it shows us something about how God will set up your resurrection body. The last words of our passage today are when Paul wrote that we will “*bear the image of the man of heaven.*” Paul concluded from the observation of us being in the image of Adam, that we will also be in the image of Christ. Of course Paul would want us to focus not on our ability to walk through walls, which will not impress anyone in heaven because everyone can do it, but rather Paul wants us to focus on our moral ability when we get to heaven. That is, we bear the image of Christ. We are like Christ. Paul wrote in Romans 8:29 how this was God’s plan all along, to populate earth with people like Adam, the man of the earth, and to populate heaven with people like Christ, the man of heaven, Here is the statement of Paul over in Romans 8:29, “*For those whom [God] foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be firstborn among many brothers.*” This is the ultimate state of humans who are rescued by Christ. We are conformed to the likeness of God’s Son. We become like Jesus. To bear the resemblance of Jesus Christ our Lord is to reach the highest point of human existence. We will literally be in heaven. The apostle John teaches the same things

as the apostle Paul, when John wrote in 1 John 3:2, “*Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is.*”

Christ has the power to transform our bodies. Philippians 3:20-21, “*...our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body, by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to Himself.*”

Let’s review - this passage has shown us us the conceivability on the basis of the actions of God as Creator with vast resourcefulness to create many orders of being, that this same God our Redeemer and Resurrection Giver, is able to give us a sort of resurrection body that is completely outside of our present experience and knowledge.

In order to save us, Christ the only imperishable one, became perishable on our behalf. The man of heaven took on a body of dust in order that we who are made of dust might take on a heavenly body. Jesus became like a grain of wheat – buried in the ground – but both Jesus and the wheat are counterintuitively transformed to bear much fruit. The imperishable became perishable so that the perishable might become imperishable. Jesus, the glorious One, experienced dishonor so that the dishonorable might experience glory. Jesus, the powerful One, became weak, so that the weak might become powerful. Jesus, who deserved life experienced death so that those who deserved death might experience new life. Jesus the man of heaven, made himself a Son of Man – a man of the earth – so that the sons of Adam, the men of the earth, might become men of heaven. In Jesus the natural and the supernatural come together. In Jesus, the present and the future converge.

### **Conclusion:**

#### **Rejoice in the power of God, the Resurrection Giver.**

This is an issue about whether or not our God has real power.

Since God can turn an acorn into an Oak, and God can turn a hill of beans into a harvest of beans, and God can create humans, animals, birds and fish, and since God can create the moon and stars. God can keep humans going on the planet since Adam, and God can send Christ to cleanse us of our sins and give us new spiritual life.

Since God can raise Christ from the dead, then God can raise us from the dead.

Jesus got into a debate with a religious group called the Sadducees. The Sadducees were well-known for scoffing at the idea of the body being raised. They came up with a resurrection riddle, a puzzle to try to show that Jesus did not have as much wisdom as the crowds thought. They wanted to trap and embarrass Jesus.

The riddle has to do with seven brothers who were grown men. The first

brother married a woman, and then the man died. The Biblical law was that the brother would marry the woman to take care of her. The second brother died. Then the third married her and died. So it went, until all 7 brothers had been married to the same woman. This was their trick question to Jesus, recorded in Mark 12:23, *“In the resurrection, when they rise again, whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as wife.”*

The Sadducees thought that their question would stump Jesus.

But right away in the very next verse, *“Jesus said to them, ‘Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God?’”*

The Sadducees had never ever thought that the God who created the moon and stars, and every creature that exists, in the space of six days, is able to create a whole new order in which their trick questions, their difficulties, their supposed complexities of this life hold no sway, like turning on a flashlight at noon adds no light.

Jesus said to the Sadducees that in heaven there is no marriage. And God is the God of the living, including Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

How did Paul answer the questions at the start of this passage? How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?

Paul said Fool, and then Paul wrote about the power of God for the next 15 verses.

We can debate with people about all sorts of theological matters.

But when it comes to the resurrection, the only wise answer is – You don’t understand how powerful God is. God has been trying to show you your whole life in the things of creation all around you, but you missed all the clues. The resurrection is given by the Resurrection Giver, who is the Creator God.

As Jeremiah wrote in Jeremiah 32:17, *“Ah, Lord God! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.”*

**Rejoice in the power of God, the Resurrection Giver.**