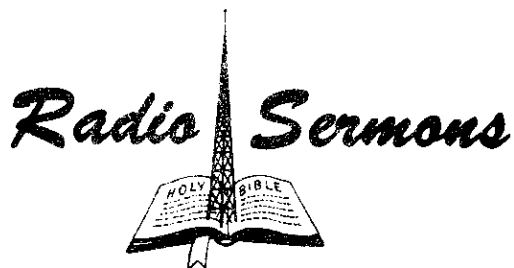


The Resurrection of The Body



by
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Unfortunately, pages 1 & 2 were missing in this book. Page 3 follows.

out upon us that constantly saves us from the power of sin and gives us the ability to perform His works. Also, we *will be saved* in the future when Christ comes to redeem the body and to catch us up to Heaven to be forever in His presence. This is salvation in three tenses.

True faith always leads to eternal salvation. However, it is quite possible for one to give mere intellectual assent to the truth of the Gospel and, by baptism and lip profession, to "appear" Christian when actually there was no work of grace in the soul. This is to "believe in vain — in emptiness." This kind of profession is empty faith which accomplishes nothing so far as the salvation of the individual is concerned. Real faith will be emphasized by godly living. "Vain" faith will be shown by empty works and by a departure from the commandments of Christ in daily life. Paul emphasizes the possibility of idle profession when he writes the words, "If ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain."

"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received." Before giving the clearest, most concise definition of the Gospel that we have in all Scripture, Paul emphasizes that his evangel was the same message that had resulted in his own salvation. The Apostle, like all who are ever saved in this age of God's grace, was saved by acceptance of the simple two-part message.

Was Paul saved by the *hearing* of the Gospel message? Yes. Paul (Saul) knew the message even before his conversion. He had stood by, guarding the outer clothing of the executioners, at the time of the stoning of Stephen and had heard the Gospel message from the lips of this dying martyr. He was a witness to Stephen's final words, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (see Acts 7:59, 60).

Saul did not receive the message when Stephen proclaimed it. It was later, on the Damascus Road, that the Lord appeared directly to this one who had vowed to wipe the

name of Christ from the face of the earth. Saul fell to the earth (as the divine Presence was manifest), and heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" And when Saul had asked the identity of the One who spoke, the voice continued, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."

The presence of the risen Lord himself authenticated the Gospel message for the persecutor, Saul, who in turn showed his immediate acceptance of the message in saying, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" He believed the evangel and was gloriously saved. When Ananias was sent to restore Saul's sight, the Lord told him, "... Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15).

It is in the light of his own glorious salvation and commission as an Apostle that Paul now writes, "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." *That* is the Gospel message! That is the *full* Gospel! We hear a great deal today about "full Gospel preachers," who, in actuality, usually add a great deal to the Gospel message. Paul was a "full Gospel preacher." And in the words just quoted we have his full Gospel.

There are only two parts to the Gospel message: (1) The Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins; and (2) The Lord Jesus Christ was raised for our justification. Paul proclaimed both of these parts of the message; there is nothing further to add. It is the Gospel that had saved him and the Gospel that he preached.

First the Apostle writes, "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." There are three things to be noticed here. "Christ died" is a fact of history. Notice, Paul says, "*Christ* died." He does not say, "*Jesus* died." That is a denial of the heretical teaching which said that only Jesus the Man died on the Cross, and that the anointing spirit of "Christ"

(who had come upon Him at the time of His baptism) departed before His death. No! Paul says, "*Christ died*" — the Lord Jesus *was* Christ who was fully man and fully God in one glorious Person!

"Christ died." Alone, those words might not mean anything more than the death of a martyr; but Paul does not stop with just those words. He says, "*Christ died for our sins*" which is a definite doctrinal statement which explains the reason for that death. It was an *expiatory* (a *substitutionary atoning*) sacrifice. "He gave himself a ransom for all." He took the sinner's place and bore his judgment. He died as our Substitute, that we who believe this message might never have to experience spiritual death.

The death of Christ was "according to the Scriptures." Throughout the Old Testament, in type and in actual prophetic declaration, we find the sacrificial, atoning death of Christ. All the sacrifices of the legal system of Israel typified His onetime offering of Himself upon the Cross. Indeed, it goes back further than that. The offering of Abel when "he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof" pictured Christ's expiatory sacrifice. When Noah "took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar," he was but picturing the coming sacrificial death of Christ. All of the sacrifices of former ages point toward this event.

The prophets of Israel looked forward to that great event as the supreme fact of all of God's revelation. In Psalm 22, King David presents a graphic picture of Christ's death on the Cross, and ends this Psalm with the words, "They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that *he hath done this (it is finished).*" Psalm 69 also presents Christ's death as an atoning sacrifice. In Verse 31, David points to Israel's sacrifices as but "forerunners" of the Messiah's death, when he says, "This also shall please the LORD better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs."

Isaiah 53 presents a vivid description of Christ's substitutionary death on the Cross, which is specifically declared in Isaiah 53:8: "He was taken from prison and from judgment; and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken."

The Prophet Daniel makes a positive declaration of the Messiah's substitutionary death. Note Daniel 9:26: "And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself. . . ." Zechariah makes a definite reference to Christ's death on the Cross in Chapter 13, Verse 6: "And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends."

God had declared in Leviticus 17:11, ". . . the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: . . ." Yet it is declared in the Book of Hebrews that it was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should put away sin. Only through the propitiatory (wiping away) death of Christ could this be accomplished, as Paul has declared, "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures."

"That he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." Observe, "he was buried." This declares the reality of His death, which was not faked, which was not a "seeming" death. He died, and His soul and Spirit departed that earthly body. He was dead; and because He was dead, they buried His precious body in Joseph's new tomb. That body lay in the tomb for a full 72 hours "according to the scriptures."

Then we come to the last point of this declaration of the Gospel, which says, "He rose again the third day, according to the scriptures." Here is *bodily* resurrection! That same body from which the soul and Spirit had departed (three days earlier) received again that divine soul and Spirit; and it arose from the tomb. Our Lord Jesus Christ (His body, His

soul, and His Spirit) came forth as a complete, resurrected, immortal Man. This was the day of the Psalmist's prediction: "... Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee" (Psalm 2:7). This is verified by the words of the Apostle in Acts 13:33: "God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee."

The resurrection of Christ was the Father's expression of satisfaction in the work His Son, in giving Himself a ransom for our sins, so blessedly accomplished on the Cross. He settled the sin question forever when He poured out His precious blood for our salvation. Then God raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in highest glory, exalted to be Priest and Saviour. Christ *was* resurrected for our justification!

We should keep in mind that, apart from His bodily resurrection, there was no proof that God had accepted His work as an atonement for our sins. It was His resurrection that provided the proof that God had established a righteous basis upon which He could forgive sins. Having been delivered up to death for our offenses, The Lord Jesus Christ has been raised again for our justification. His atoning death fully met all the righteous claims of God's throne against our sins. God declared (by bringing Him back from the dead) that there is no longer a barrier to our complete justification. (To be justified is to be declared innocent in the courts of Heaven).

The physical resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is fundamental, and is the sign that God gave to authenticate the Gospel message for this age. Do you recall the Lord's answer to the scribes and the Pharisees when they said, "Master, we would see a sign from thee"? He answered, "... An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:39, 40).

Jonah's experience in the belly of the sea monster pictured our Lord's death, burial, and resurrection. In His answer, the Lord predicted that He would die, that He would be buried in the earth for three days, and that He would rise again from the dead. His own bodily resurrection was to be the great miraculous sign that was to verify the message that He preached.

God's Word does not leave room for human theories concerning the nature of Christ's resurrection. It is not merely a question of His survival after death. It will not do to say (as one liberal scholar has done) that, "The body of Jesus sleeps in a Syrian tomb, but His soul goes marching on." This is to deny His resurrection altogether! His soul was never dead! His body died, and it was His body that was raised again.

One must believe in the bodily resurrection of our Lord in order to be saved. The resurrection of Christ is very much a part of the Gospel message and is why the Apostle Paul included resurrection in "the word of faith" that he preached as recorded in Romans 10:9, 10. "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, *and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead*, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

"*God hath raised him from the dead.*" The resurrection of Christ is ascribed to each Person of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — all had part in that glorious work. The Lord Jesus said, ". . . Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up . . . he spake of the temple of His body" (John 2:19-21). He was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father. "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). His resurrection is also attributed to the Holy Spirit. "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Romans 8:11). The entire Godhead was concerned and involved in the resurrection.

"He rose again the third day *according to the scriptures.*" His resurrection, as His death, was also "according to the Scriptures." It is still the *Old Testament Scriptures* that Paul has in view, for the resurrection of the Messiah was predicted in the Law and the Prophets. The first hint of resurrection came from the LORD God to the mother of human race in the Garden of Eden. The LORD's words were spoken, not to her, but to the archenemy of the race in her hearing. The woman's Seed "shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (see Genesis 3:15). This expression is poetic in form, but infinite in what it suggests. This ancient promise spoke of a day of triumph coming, but would be triumph through travail.

We should scan through all the writings (psalms, prophets, and teachers in the Old Testament), and see how constant is the theme of Messiah's triumph over death. In Leviticus 23:10-14, we see Messiah's resurrection pictured in the feast of the First Fruits the day following the first seventh-day sabbath after the Passover. Psalm 16:10 makes a definite reference to resurrection. "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (sheol); neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." After the death of the Suffering Saviour (pictured so graphically in the earlier verses), Psalm 22:22 speaks of the resurrection of that One who died: "I will declare thy name (the Father's Name) unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation (church) will I praise thee."

Isaiah spoke of the Messiah's resurrection in the very chapter in which he so vividly describes His substitutionary death. In Isaiah 53:10, we find these words. "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; He hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, *he shall prolong his days*, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand." In Psalm 110:1, we see Him as the risen One, taking His seat at God's right hand in heaven. "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

Yes, the Old Testament Scriptures — from Genesis to Malachi — all predict and confirm the Messiah's death, burial,

and resurrection. Without His resurrection, there is no Gospel to preach. The physical, bodily resurrection of Christ is one of the most significant teachings of the Scriptures. The fact of the resurrection is the heart of all Christian dogma. Therefore, Paul restates the Gospel, prior to directing the minds of his readers to the detailed teachings of resurrection of the body. Note: "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures."

2.

The Witness to the Resurrection

"And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed" (1 Corinthians 15:5-11).

It has been said that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the best witnessed event in human history. There were more witnesses to the *fact* of His bodily resurrection than can be found for any other event of ancient times. Several of these eyewitnesses left written records of that miracle of God. The Gospels of Matthew and John, and the First Epistle of Peter, contain records of the Lord's resurrection that were written by eyewitnesses. It is quite likely that the evangelist Mark was also an eyewitness to this event.

Most events recorded by ancient historians are considered fact by the secular world, even if spoken of by one writer only. Why is it, then, that the world rejects Christ's resurrection, when we have personal written records from at least three eyewitnesses to the event? Scripture tells us, "... in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established" (Matthew 18:16). It would seem that the records given to us by God would be adequate to establish undoubting belief in the bodily resurrection of Christ by all who hear the Word.

The witness to Christ's resurrection does not stop with those who left personal written records of what they had seen. The Apostle Paul lists specific witnesses to the resurrection in Verses 5 through 8. Even with those mentioned, the Apostle has not exhausted the list, but rather has simply taken representative names. The resurrection of Jesus Christ did not occur in a closet. It was a public event, seen by a great cloud of witnesses during the forty days of the Lord's post-resurrection ministry. God gave positive testimony of the resurrection to those who are appointed to go out and proclaim salvation through the crucified and risen Christ.

The risen Christ who died, and was buried, and rose, made His resurrection known to hundreds. His appearances to these came after the Cross, after His burial, after His resurrection. He was seen alive! In opening this list of witnesses, the Apostle Paul first writes, "And that He was seen of Cephas."

We should go back and review the post-resurrection stories of His appearances. Peter (Cephas) was among the very first to see Him. Some of the women were actually the first, and to them the angel said, "Go, tell his disciples, and Peter." Peter went to see Him, and they had a private interview.

When two disciples came back from walking to Emmaus, and other disciples greeted them, they said, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon." It was Cephas

(Simon Peter) who, many years after the event, began his first inspired letter, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope *by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*" (1 Peter 1:3).

Paul speaks of the twelve Apostles twice, in Verses 5 and 7 of 1 Corinthians 15. "And . . . he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve" (v.5). Notice, Paul *mentions twelve* apostles. He himself had not yet been called to be an apostle (at the time of the Lord's post-resurrection appearances). Judas, the betrayer, was already dead. The "twelve" referred to includes the original eleven and Matthias, the one selected to fill the vacancy left by Judas. (See Acts 1:26.) The actual selection of Matthias had not yet taken place, but God already considered him an apostle. Although Paul was later called to be an apostle to the Gentiles, he was never numbered among the original twelve. He was the thirteenth Apostle — "One born out of due time."

The Gospel writers have given us the story of how the risen Christ appeared to all of them together on two specific occasions. There were other occasions when the Lord appeared to several of the disciples together, but not the *entire* group. The post-resurrection appearance to the seven who were fishing in the Sea of Galilee (recorded in John 21) was one of those occasions.

Paul next writes, "After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep." There was at least one post-resurrection appearance of the Lord to a crowd of greater than 500 men. All of them saw Him in resurrection life, and at the time Paul wrote this letter many were still available to give their own personal testimony. Some, however, were dead. This letter to the Corinthian church was written about A.D. 54. At least 22 years had gone by since the time of that wonderful gathering.

Have we any account of that appearance in the Gospel records? We cannot be absolutely certain, but perhaps we do

have a reference to it. The women were instructed to tell His disciples to go into Galilee, where they would see Him. It was quite a journey for these women (and for those whom they told) to go all the way up to Galilee. But as the group started out from Jerusalem and the news spread as to where they were going, it is probable that many joined them. The group of more than 500 were likely those who gathered in Galilee in response to the instructions originally given to the women. It must have been a marvelous gathering.

“After that, he was seen of James; then of all the Apostles.” In writing the specific names given in these verses, Paul has actually provided legal evidence to attest to the fact of our Lord’s physical resurrection. This is not just a vague reference saying that He was seen in resurrection life. He was seen of Cephas (Peter), and He was seen of James. (It is most likely James the Apostle that Paul has in view here.) We have no other scriptural account of His appearing to James, but the several appearances to Cephas are well documented by other Scripture. There was most definitely legal proof that the Lord did arise from the dead.

The Lord’s many visible appearances to so large a number of reputable witnesses, and the fact that His dead body could never be located anywhere, are but two of the proofs of His resurrection. We also have the many manifestations of the Holy Spirit’s power, and the confident assurance and new bravery of His apostles. In addition, we have a scriptural record of the way God set His seal upon their ministry in miracles of healing, and in the salvation of thousands. All of these facts prove that Jesus Christ *did* vanquish death, and that He *did* come forth from Joseph’s new rock-hewn tomb to die no more. That tomb is still empty, and it ever will be. The body that once lay in that inner niche of the crypt, covered with linen cloths, came out of its wrappings (at God’s appointed hour) like a butterfly leaving the chrysalis shell.

Paul’s record emphasizes that he was not simply teaching the survival of the spirit after the death of the body. That

would prove life after death, but it would not prove resurrection. Paul presents evidence that the *body* that hung on the Cross is the *body* that was raised from the grave. That body still bore the prints of the nails and the wound in the side (see John 20:27). It was many years afterward that the Apostle John saw (in the midst of the throne of God) a "Lamb as it had been slain." This would indicate that the marks of His wounds will be upon His body forever.

It is true that a great change had come over our Lord's body in resurrection, for He could enter a room when all doors were closed and locked, and He could appear and disappear at will. He indicated that His body was now a body of "*flesh and bone*." No mention is made of the return of that blood which had been poured out in sacrifice. The resurrection body was different, but was still positively identified with the body that was placed in the tomb. Paul has presented positive proof of our Lord's *bodily* resurrection.

Then Paul writes, "And last of all He was seen of me also." This is Paul's definite claim that he had seen the Lord after His resurrection. The record of the first appearance to Paul is given three times in the Book of Acts. By Paul's own testimony in other writings, we know that there were also other appearances of the Lord to him. Perhaps the greatest individual proof of the resurrection is the human author of this letter.

The first time Paul saw the Lord, he certainly did not *expect* to see Him. Not only was the vision unexpected and startling, it was absolutely revolutionary. This man's whole life was changed by the vision of the risen Lord. He believed the Gospel. He was born-again, and he became a new creature in Christ. He was Saul; he became Paul.

It is interesting to remember that after Paul had been to Damascus, he went into Arabia, and was there for two or three years. What was he doing during that stay in Arabia? He was being personally trained by the Lord himself there under the shadow of Mount Sinai from where God had given the

Law. While in Arabia, Paul reflected upon all that he had learned as a Rabbi. He pondered this in the light of the resurrection of Christ. After a time, he went back to Jerusalem for a short visit; and then he went to Tarsus. There is indication that the Lord appeared to him in both these places. He was in Tarsus ten years before he began his preaching — before he began his great apostolic ministry. This was where Paul received “seminary” training, under the tutelage of the risen Christ himself.

“And last of all he was seen of me also, as one born out of due time.” Paul is referring to his spiritual rebirth. He was not a believer during those days between Christ’s resurrection and ascension. He had not walked with Christ during that three and a-half-year period of His earthly ministry. He did not believe the Gospel message (nor receive the new birth unto spiritual life) until the risen Christ appeared to him on the Damascus Road. Nevertheless, he was a “called” Apostle. All of the former twelve apostles (including Matthias rather than Judas) had believed on the Lord, and had been spiritually reborn, before Christ’s death on the Cross. Saul (Paul) had not. In this sense, he was one of “untimely birth.”

“Last of all, as unto one born out of due time, he appeared to me also. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.” Paul is looking back at his past history. He was horrified by what he had been and what he had done in those early days. He had watched Stephen’s death, and had approved of it. In his zeal to protect what he thought was his Jewish heritage, he had set out to wipe the testimony of Christ from the earth, and had been responsible for the death of a number of Christ’s followers. He was on his way to Damascus, armed with the high priest’s letters of authority to destroy Christian witness in that city, when the risen Lord had appeared to him and changed his whole life. It is because of this dark past that Paul states, “For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle.”

“I am the hindermost of the apostles, and (by my own merit) I am not equal to even be called an apostle.” These

words do not demonstrate false humility on the part of the Apostle Paul; he was writing under inspiration of God's Holy Spirit. What he says is true: By his own rights, he was not fit to be called an apostle. God the Holy Spirit had led Paul to make a public confession of guilt.

Then come the words that speak of Paul's profound humiliation, "I persecuted the church of God." In his unsaved days, this man had been the chief persecutor of Christianity. He had tried to wipe away that institution of which the Lord Jesus had said, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (see Matthew 16:18). Paul's statement destroys a teaching that has become prominent among certain groups of Christians today who have been called "ultradispensationalists." They teach that the "church" of this age was not formed until after Paul's imprisonment in Rome. They say that his prison epistles, particularly the Epistle to the Ephesians, reveal and establish the doctrines of the church. Therefore, the "church" was not born until that later time period. But Paul says that even in his unsaved days, "I persecuted the church of God." It must have been in existence from the Day of Pentecost, if Paul persecuted it before his conversion!

Paul's words of humiliation are followed by exultant words of triumph. "But by the grace of God I am what I am." Paul was not equal to be an apostle in his own right, but by the grace of God he had been made one. These words do not merely mean that he owed everything to grace. They mean also that he had paid his debt, not by his own actions, but by Christ's death on the Cross. Paul had yielded to grace!

Then he goes on. "I did not receive the grace of God in vain. I yielded to Him, and it mastered me." Paul was a Jew first, but a Greek by upbringing, and also a Roman citizen. "But by the grace of God I am what I am." Paul is saying, "What I am is the supreme proof of the value and power of the Gospel that I heard, and that I believed at the time that the Lord first appeared unto me." Because of the power of God in his life, the Apostle Paul (after his conversion) turned to the ministry of Christ with a zeal greater than he had had for Judaism.

"His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." When God's grace saved Paul, it did not result in an empty life of nothingness. God's grace produced works in his life. "I labored more abundantly than they all," referring to the other twelve Apostles. Paul worked harder for the ministry of Christ than all of those who had walked with Him during His earthly ministry.

But Paul is not glorifying himself when he writes these words. He is writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and what he writes is truth. God himself verifies that Paul was the most zealous of all the others.

But even Paul's labor did not find its source within himself. "I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." Paul did not (of his own power) carry on his ministry among the Gentiles. It was God's grace poured out upon him that empowered him to accomplish such abundant works for Christ. The Apostle could not take credit for that which is entirely of God.

Saul of Tarsus (Paul) could never forget that he had once been an opponent of Christ and a persecutor of His church, and therefore felt that he was not fit to be called an apostle. Yet, he could rejoice in the infinite grace that had made him what he was: the messenger of that same Christ, whom he had once hated, to the Gentile world. He went from country to country and from people to people, making known this glorious Gospel, which God wrought in him in such a mighty way. Therefore, he could say in all humility, "I labored more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." But, Paul would not stress the work of the servant; He stressed, rather, the message that the servant carried to men. Whoever the preacher might have been, when people believed the message, they were saved. "However this began, whether it be I or they, whether it be either prophet, teacher, or evangelist, so we preached, and so ye believed."

The resurrection is the great central fact to Christian faith

and experience. It is the *fact* of the resurrection that becomes the rock, the anchor of faith, and gives meaning to death.

There were many witnesses to the reality of the resurrection of Christ. The Apostle Paul has presented his evidence, and he has made his case.

3. The Significance of Christ's Resurrection

"Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:12-20).

As the Apostle Paul continues his inspired letter, he develops and vigorously defends the fundamental truth, the resurrection of the body. There were some in the Corinthian assembly who were raising questions as to the reality of bodily resurrection. There were some who were denying the fact of resurrection in general, which could be expected because of the pagan philosophical atmosphere of Corinth, and because of the background of various members of the church. They had been called from this background by Paul's preaching of the Gospel, yet their early training in paganism

disallowed their full acceptance of all the great truths of Christian faith.

In the pagan society of Corinth, these Christian people found supposed "philosophic" teachings and beliefs, including three major views held by the Corinthian teachers and philosophers: Epicureanism, Stoicism, and Platonism. These were three distinct schools of philosophy, which held certain views on life after death and resurrection. The position of the Epicurean was that of total materialism; he denied any existence at all beyond death. The Stoic believed that at death the soul was merged in deity, which resulted in the complete loss of any individual identity and personality. The Platonist insisted upon the immortality of the soul, but he absolutely denied the idea of bodily resurrection.

The Corinthian church existed in a city permeated with these teachings, and many members were still under such influence. Most likely, the view taken by some dominant members of the Corinthian church was Platonism rather than Epicureanism or Stoicism. They believed in life after death, or immortality of the soul. They did not believe that one ceased to exist when he died. (No real Christian could believe that!) They believed in a continuing of personality, but *no bodily resurrection*. They thought that when death came and the body was laid away in the tomb, that was the end of it. They never expected to meet their loved ones again in physical form; nor did they expect to have a material body again.

That undoubtedly was the peculiar view to which Paul referred here, "How say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" He then meets that idea as a definite error and shows what serious consequences such a view would necessarily involve.

Paul asks, "If Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" Resurrection of the dead is the very foundation of Christianity. Everywhere the apostles and disciples went, they preached Jesus and the resurrection. All Christian faith rests upon that.

Paul has just reiterated the two great truths of the Gospel: Christ was delivered up to death because of our sins, and Christ was raised again as the token of God the Father's satisfaction in the work that His Son accomplished. The teaching that He was raised again is the teaching of bodily resurrection. (Only the body dies. The soul and spirit cannot be resurrected.) The Gospel declares that Christ is now the risen One who ever lives "to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him" (see Hebrews 7:25).

Many today have fallen into an error similar to the one held by the Corinthians, and teach that our Lord Jesus Christ never came out of the grave in His material body. They admit His continued existence in Spirit, but they deny His physical, bodily resurrection. The great sign that was given to authenticate the Gospel message to earliest Christians was the bodily resurrection of Christ. His resurrection proved that He had actually settled the sin question, and that redemption was completed. He came out of the tomb in the very same body that had gone into it, though that body was changed in a most wonderful way. Nevertheless, His resurrection body was a real human body. We know that in the hands and feet it bore the prints of the nails, and in the side the wound of the Roman spear. He was raised bodily from the tomb.

Yes, our Lord lives in Heaven in the very body in which He once walked this earth, but His body is now changed and glorified. Christian testimony begins with this fact. If one is seeking the way of eternal life, if he inquires, "What must I do to be saved?", the answer comes in unmistakable clearness. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (see Romans 10:9). We should not consider anyone a Christian who denies the physical, bodily resurrection of our Lord.

"Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some from among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen." Paul's logic is very simple. He says, "I

have just told you that the Gospel message I preach involves a statement of the bodily resurrection of Christ. Now if I constantly preach that Christ is raised from the dead, how could you possibly say that there is no such thing as resurrection from the dead? If there is no such thing as resurrection of the body, then we have to admit that Christ is not risen. Thus, we have just established that a part of the Gospel message is a lie!"

What is Paul declaring here? He declares that to deny the resurrection of Christ is to deny the *fact* of resurrection, and that invalidates the entire Christian message and experience. He is arguing that if Christ is not risen bodily from the tomb, then the very message of life is a lie.

He goes on, "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." If the Lord's resurrection did not take place (and it did not, if there is no such thing as resurrection), then our preaching is vain, void, empty. And there is no value, no meaning, and no truth in our preaching. And those of you who think you were saved by the message he preached are mistaken. You have believed a lie; therefore, "Your faith is also vain."

What does it mean for "Your faith to be also vain"? The faith you profess is empty. If Christ be not raised, the whole Christian message is invalid, and so is the whole Christian experience. You have fastened your faith upon unreality. We must understand how basic the resurrection is to the Christian faith and message. The Apostle Paul is emphasizing how devastating it is to Christian faith not to believe in bodily resurrection.

The devastation goes even beyond that which he had already stated. "Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God: because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ: Whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not." Paul is speaking primarily of himself and the other apostles when he says, "When we preached that Gospel, we were false witnesses, and were lying about God. We have

declared God raised Christ from the dead, and if He was not raised, then what we have said is untrue." It is serious business to be found a false witness of God! Preaching the Gospel makes one a liar, if Christ was not *bodily raised from the dead*. And He could not be raised up, "If so be that the dead rise not." Denial of bodily resurrection destroys not only the evangel, but also the evangelist!

If Christ did not come forth from the tomb in resurrection life, then our redemption is not an accomplished fact! Let us reemphasize it: His bodily resurrection is the only sign that God gave to authenticate the message of eternal life. When Our Lord was here on earth, He told His disciples that He was going to die. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (see Matthew 20:28). He also told them, "The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again" (see Luke 24:7).

If the foregoing statement of the Lord has never been fulfilled, then He stands convicted of false testimony! He either was Himself deluded into thinking that He was the Saviour, the Redeemer who was to die for sinners and rise again, or else He was a deliberate deceiver. It is His resurrection — the fulfillment of His own prediction — that proves that He was the Sacrifice for sin which He proclaimed Himself to be. If His resurrection did not take place, "Then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ: whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not."

Paul reemphasizes the impossibility of Christ's being raised from the dead if there is no such thing as resurrection. Note Verse 16: "For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised." Then he goes on, "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." If there is no resurrection, there is no forgiveness of sins! Belief in the Gospel message had been declared to result in *the forgiveness of sins*. The Gospel message is a lie, if the doctrine of bodily resurrection be rejected. Paul's words fall like a crushing weight on

those who felt their peace with God had been made by Christ's work of the Cross. If the doctrine of the resurrection of the body is denied, "Your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins."

If our faith is vain, what then? Sin remains. "Ye are yet in your sins." What does that mean? It means that Christ's death was a failure. Hope is deferred or destroyed. What does that mean? It means that Christ's promises were all false, and the whole superstructure of the Christian faith and experience goes to pieces and is entirely false, if Christ did not rise! Thus, lost sinners are not forgiven; we have no hope. How terrible the plight!

It goes even beyond this. If there is no resurrection from the dead, "Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." Those who had believed the Gospel message, and then had experienced physical death, have gone on to eternal punishment. They had put their hope in a lie. They had expected to go into the presence of their Saviour when soul and spirit departed the body. But on drawing their last breath, they went out into a godless eternity. They built upon a false foundation. They believed an empty Gospel. All this is true, "If so be that the dead rise not."

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable (most to be pitied)." We who have gladly believed the Gospel message have staked everything on the redemptive work of Christ. Our hope was so great, so bright, so full of glory. If it is all in vain, we are in darkness, and we are to be pitied. Our faith is destroyed, and so is our hope. If Christ did not rise, then His intentions — whatever they may have been — were not fulfilled. He failed to deal with sin. If Christ be not raised, then all the promises of life in Him are broken down forevermore; and we are of all men most pitiable.

Because of our faith in Him, we have given up the world and its seeming pleasures; we have become strangers and pilgrims in this earthly scene. Now, if there is no risen Christ, if

this is all a mistake, we are going to lose both worlds. (We gladly gave up this present world, because we thought we saw another above our heads.) But, that higher world is only a dream, a fantasy, if Christ be not risen. Paul is correct when he cites our pitiful state.

What a mistake, what a blunder, we have made in believing the Gospel "if Christ be not risen." All Christians, down through this age of grace, were simply following a will-o'-the-wisp that eventually landed, or will land, in utter darkness and despair. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

But thank God! The Apostle does not close this section of his letter with any such dreary suggestion. He says, "But now *is* Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." There is no doubt about Christ's resurrection! There *is* resurrection from the dead! Christ was raised from the tomb! We know that He who died for our sins has been raised again.

All that the inspired Apostle presents in the last few verses are simply logical suppositions, but indeed groundless. One should not think for a single moment that preaching the Gospel is vain, that faith is vain, and that hope is destroyed. All those suppositions were (and are) *not true*; they began with the false precept that there is no such thing as resurrection from the dead. Christ *has been raised* from the dead! We are not continuing in our sins! Hope has not perished! We who have believed the Gospel message have known what it is to be loosed from our sins.

Christ *is* risen, and His resurrection is our earnest, our promise. He has become "the firstfruits of them that slept." Everyone of Jewish background understood that figure. They remember the law of the "Feast of Firstfruits" as it is given in Leviticus 23. In the practical sense, they knew what the "Firstfruits" represented.

The Feast of Firstfruits was the time when the days of planting and the days of cultivation had passed, and the

harvest days were beginning. During this time, the Israelite would go out in his field; and upon seeing a fast ripening sheaf, he would pluck it, and present it to the Lord in the Temple, or at the Tabernacle gate, as the firstfruits or the "earnest" of the coming harvest. By and by, when a few more days or weeks had gone by, he would go back to that field and would find ripened grain everywhere. However, the great harvest was like the sheaf of the firstfruits: It was exactly the same in character.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Firstfruits of resurrection, "The firstfruits of them that slept." He was also the fulfillment of the Levitical feast. He came forth from the tomb the morrow after the seventh-day sabbath which followed the passover. That feast predicted His resurrection.

By and by the day will come when all His own will be called forth from their tombs. That will be the glorious harvest, and in that day every one of His children (the saved ones) will be like the "Firstfruits" — like Him, our blessed, glorious Lord! We also will have a resurrection body. We also will be forever triumphant over death. Throughout an eternity of joy and gladness, we shall glorify the One who has redeemed us to Himself.

With assurance we can proclaim, "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept."

4.

The Parade of Resurrections

“For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:21-28).

In the earlier verses of this chapter, we have the Apostle Paul’s argument that the resurrection of our Lord is the basis of our hope for eternity. He makes it plain that this is not a doctrine that is open to question. It is not something about which those who profess to know Christ as Saviour may have different opinions. Our Lord’s bodily resurrection is a fundamental fact, just as he has stated in Verse 20: “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.” He has come out of the grave as a sample of those who will follow in like manner at the time of His Second Coming.

As He continues, Paul deals with the great fact of Christ’s resurrection by showing its relationship to the entire program of God. He surveys God’s plan of the ages in just a few sentences, and in a highly selective way scans the whole sweep of human history. Verses 21 and 22 take us back to the very beginning of human history and show us how Adam’s fall relates to Christ’s resurrection.

"For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." It was Adam, as federal head of the human race, who by his sin plunged all humanity into death and judgment. Adam was created in the image of God. But he disobeyed God. He sinned, and he marred that image in which he was created. Later on, we read that Adam "begat a son in his own image." All of Adam's offspring were born into the world, sharing that marred image, that fallen nature, with our fallen federal head. Adam brought sin into the world, and he passed his heritage of death to the entire race. The poison of the sin nature is in all who came after him. Hence, "By man came death."

Human reasoning says that this principle is unfair. Why should *I* inherit the penalty for a sin that *I* did not *personally* commit? Why should Adam's actions have had any effect upon *me*? Adam is the one who disobeyed God; therefore, Adam *alone* should have suffered the punishment for his disobedience!

Adam was the "directly-created" first man, the seed of humanity from whom all other members of the human race have sprung. In a very real sense, the entire human race was present in him in the Garden of Eden. The creation account of Genesis 1 speaks of the creation of Adam in this sweeping way: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (see Genesis 1:27). The entire race was there. Eve, the mother of all humanity, was still present in Adam's side; the remainder of the human race was present in his loins. We were all there, and were therefore present in that first act of rebellion against God.

"By man came also the resurrection of the dead." Just as one man was responsible for bringing the penalty of death upon the entire race, so also was one Man (Christ Jesus) responsible for the antidote to death. The Lord Jesus Christ, the "last Adam," made possible the resurrection of the entire race, and He alone accomplished the work that made resurrection possible. The entire race of humanity can benefit

from what he did. For those who would claim that we had nothing to do with Adam's sin, Scripture reminds them that we also had nothing to do with Christ's resurrection. Just as we suffered loss by the actions of the first Adam, we have *gained* by the actions of the last Adam. God's program for mankind is infinitely fair. "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" (see Genesis 18:25).

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Just think of the broad scope of "In Adam all die." How true this is! We are all "in Adam" by the natural birth. Hence, our heritage is death. Adam was told, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (see Genesis 2:17). The moment that he first tasted that fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam died. Someone will say, "Oh, he did not die at that moment. He continued to live on for a total life span of 930 years." It is true that Adam did not suffer physical death when he tasted that fruit, but he did suffer spiritual death — *separation from God*. Physical death also became his destiny. Though he defied that death for nine centuries, it eventually came. "And all the days that Adam lived were 930 years: *and he died*" (see Genesis 5:5).

During his long life span, we are told, "He begat sons and daughters" (see Genesis 5:4). All those sons and daughters were born into this world as spiritually dead creatures. They were all heirs to physical death; and all their children and grandchildren, and all generations down to the present, have received that heritage. "In Adam all die."

The last part of this declaration has even greater significance than the first: "Even so in Christ shall all be made alive." This is the antidote to our Adamic inheritance. Adam brought death, but Jesus Christ brought life. We are "in Adam" by the natural birth; we are "in Christ" by the spiritual rebirth. We inherited death from Adam, life by Christ. Those who are "in Him" by faith in the Gospel (which Paul stated in the earlier verses of this chapter) have already received eternal life in Him. And in this they have the earnest

of the resurrection. We all will be bodily resurrected from the dead, just as our Lord was.

Even the wicked dead are to be resurrected. Daniel prophesied, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (see Daniel 12:2). It is the Lord Jesus Christ whose voice eventually is to be heard by all the dead. The Scripture designates two resurrections. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the *first resurrection*: on such the second death hath no power" (see Revelation 20:6). "And death and hell (hades) delivered up the dead which were in them: And they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell (hades) were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death" (see Revelation 20:13, 14).

His voice will be heard first by the righteous dead — the saved dead — but not all at the same time. Scripture describes several phases of the first resurrection. Christ's own resurrection, in fact, was the first phase. The second phase comes with the resurrection of the church, prior to the occurrence of Daniel's seventieth week. The third phase comes after Daniel's seventieth week, when the Lord comes in power and glory to establish the earthly kingdom. There may be a fourth phase at the end of that millennial reign. At a time beyond all of these phases of the first resurrection, the Lord's voice will be heard by the unsaved dead, calling them also forth from their graves. That is the time when "death and hades" give up the dead that is in them. ("Death," the grave, gives up the physical parts of the unsaved dead, while "hades" gives up the spiritual parts; physical and spiritual shall be re-joined).

"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life (that is the first resurrection); and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation (that is the second resurrection)" (see John 5:28, 29).

The expression "in Christ" refers specifically to the saved ones of this present age. "Even so *in Christ* shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order." The Greek word that is translated "order" was a military term, and was used to describe different companies of marching Roman soldiers. We would say, "Every man after his own cohort." The picture is that of a parade of soldiers. The "cohorts" pass the reviewing stand in sequential order. Those in the first cohort are seen first, then those in the second cohort, and so on. In other words, this word "order" speaks of a time sequence.

"But every man in his own *cohort*: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." In these words Paul tells us that the age in which we live is bracketed by the first two phases of the first resurrection. The first phase was the resurrection of Christ himself, which opened this age of grace. The second phase concerns "they that are in Christ at his *coming*." The word "coming" is translated from the Greek "parousia," which literally means "appearing in personal presence." It is the word used in 1 Thessalonians 4:15 to designate the Lord's appearing in the air at the time of the Rapture, and, in fact, in the New Testament citations usually refers to that specific "appearing." When He appears, when He descends into the atmospheric heaven, He will give that quickening shout of which we read, both in the latter part of this chapter, and in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17. "And the dead in Christ shall arise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

Our age began with the resurrection of Christ and will end with the resurrection of the "dead in Christ" when the Lord comes to catch His church out of this world. Thus, these two phases of the first resurrection are the "parentheses" that God has used to set apart this "parenthetical age" that stands between Daniel's sixty-ninth and seventieth week of God's program for Israel.

The Apostle Paul then looks far beyond the end of this present age that the Lord himself designated as "the

acceptable year of the Lord" in Luke 4. "Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power." With this statement, the Apostle sweeps through the centuries to the time when the history of this present earth shall be complete. There *will be* a definite end to the history of planet earth.

"Then the end." (There is nothing in the original that corresponds to the italicized *cometh*.) What end does Paul have in view? It is not the end of the age, but rather the end of this world. An age of human history must intervene between the resurrection of "they that are Christ's at His coming" and "the end." That age is the glorious kingdom age, the age of Messiah's earthly reign. After the "catching away" of the church at the end of this "Acceptable year of the Lord," a period of great turmoil will come upon the earth. This is Daniel's "seventieth week." At the end of that period, the Lord will return to earth in power and great glory and establish the earthly kingdom. In Revelation 20, we are told six times that the duration of His kingdom will be a thousand years.

Satan is bound during that thousand-year reign. But, "when the thousand years have expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison" (see Revelation 20:7). He will lead a rebellion of the unsaved who have been born into the millennial kingdom, but who have not received Christ in their hearts. This rebellion will be short lived. "And fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them" (see Revelation 20:9). Satan will be cast into the lake of fire. The unsaved dead shall be resurrected, and will stand before the Great White Throne judgment of Jesus Christ. It is then that the "heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (see 2 Peter 3:10). This is the time of which Paul speaks when he says, "Then the end."

The removal of this present earth makes way for the creation of the new heaven and the new earth. The kingdom

of this present earth is to be continued in the new earth, but there will be a change of administration. It is then that Christ "shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father." The corporate structure that existed in the Godhead from eternity past will be restored in the eternal kingdom.

The end of this present earth will come "when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet." The power of all kingdoms that defy God and His authority must be destroyed before the history of this earth can come to an end. "All rule and all authority and power" will not be put down until after that final rebellion led by Satan. That rebellion will not come until after Christ has reigned for one thousand years on this earth. "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet." As long as there is potential for rebellion, all enemies have not been put under Messiah's feet. But with that last great uprising, and its destruction, then all enemies will be trodden down.

"For he must reign." This statement alone completely destroys the idea that there will not be an earthly reign of Christ. Paul declares that he *must* reign. He also places that reign *before* the creation of the new earth, because he places it before the putting down of all enemies. There will never be potential for rebellion in the new earth. Only a literal reign on this earth can fulfill that which is recorded in these words.

"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." This is a reference to the completion of the second resurrection. Physical death is the separation of the soul and spirit from the body; resurrection is the rejoining of the soul and spirit to the body. Resurrection destroys death. Therefore, when all shall have been resurrected, then death has met its destruction. Death is an enemy, not only to man, but to God. When the second resurrection is complete, then that last enemy shall be destroyed.

The Apostle Paul then goes on to clarify the terms of the eternal Covenant of Redemption. (This is the covenant made

within the Godhead before the creation of the earth. It is the eternal decree referred to in Psalm 2:7-9). "For he (God the Father) hath put all things under his (God the Son's) feet. But when he (God the Father) saith all things are put under him (God the Son), it is manifest that he (God the Father) is excepted, which did put all things under him (God the Son)." The Covenant of Redemption placed God the Son in authority over all created things as long as this present earth endures. However, when the history of this earth is complete and the new earth has been created, then ultimate authority will revert to God the Father. This was the "corporate structure" of the Godhead in all eternity past. Paul points out that it is evident that God the Father excepted Himself when He delivered authority over all things to the Son.

"And when all things shall be subdued unto him (the Son), then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him (the Father) that put all things under him (the Son), that God may be all in all." When the history of this present earth comes to an end, when the last enemy has been destroyed, then the Lord Jesus Christ will gladly subordinate Himself to the authority of the Father. The work assigned to the Son by the Covenant of Redemption will then be complete. The relationship that existed within the Godhead from all eternity past will be restored. The Son will take His place of subordination to the authority of the Father, and the structure of the Godhead will exist as it was through all eternity past. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (see John 1:1).

The saints of God will exist throughout all eternity in perfect communion with God in all His fullness. This condition of perfect harmony between deity and manhood is stated by Paul in the closing words of Verse 28: "That God may be all in all." God, in all His triune fullness, will be in perfect control of all things throughout all eternity future.

5. Filling the Ranks

"Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead? And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die. Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame" (1 Corinthians 15:29-34).

The Apostle Paul has just given us a glimpse of God's future program for the present world and for the world to come. He has pointed out that there is to be a resurrection of the dead in Christ at the time of our Lord's coming for His church. After this, the Lord will establish His earthly reign. That kingdom must run its course, and then be concluded by a rebellion of the unsaved ones (who were born into that kingdom), led by Satan. God will destroy those rebels, and He will bring to a conclusion the history of this present planet. The unsaved dead will be resurrected to stand judgment at the Great White Throne. God will then destroy this present earth, and replace it with the new earth. The Son will deliver up the kingdom to the Father, "That God may be all in all."

Then the Apostle asks, "Else," (if all this is not so), "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead?" Paul asks several questions, the first being: "What will it profit them if they are baptized in place of the dead?"

This question includes one of the most controversial expressions in all the Bible: "baptized for the dead." This expression is not found elsewhere in Scripture. Exactly what does it mean; Down through the centuries a number of different interpretations have been suggested. One of the most common among those who believe the Word of God is that

we as Christians are baptized for (or in honor of) our Lord Jesus Christ who died. He died; He went down into death. We have been identified with Him, and in our baptism we confess our death with Him. Therefore, "Baptized for the dead" really means "Baptized for Christ who died."

This interpretation is not contrary to the teaching of other Scriptures. It is true that believers are baptized into the death of Jesus Christ. That is the exact meaning of the ordinance of baptism. But is this Paul's meaning as he uses this peculiar expression here?

No, this interpretation cannot stand in light of the literal rendering in Greek. The expression should be translated, "Baptized in place of (or over) the dead ones (or those who have died)." The word "dead" is in the plural, and it means "dead ones." It is not a singular noun and therefore cannot refer to Christ. It also is not, "baptized *because* of Christ." Neither the preposition nor the noun will allow the idea that we are "baptized because of Christ." The actual rendering would have to be, "baptized in place of dead ones."

Further, it is not, "baptized on behalf of, or for the benefit, of dead ones." The preposition does not suggest that and rules out the interpretation made by those who called themselves "the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints." We cannot be baptized for the benefit of men and women who have already died, thus "saving" them after they have passed on into eternity. This idea is heretical, and Paul is not suggesting any such thing. His question is, "Else what shall they do which are baptized in place of the dead ones?"

Here is what the Apostle Paul actually means by this question. Recall that in the earlier part of this chapter the Apostle had reproved those who denied the physical resurrection of the Lord. He had said, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." Everything, for the believer, depends upon the resurrection of Christ. He was delivered up to death for our offenses, and He was raised again for our justification. If He is not raised bodily from the

tomb, then without doubt, redemption has never been accomplished. The sin question has never been settled, and they who have fallen asleep in Christ are perished. They have found that their profession has gone for nothing. There is no redemption if Christ be not raised.

Think of the great multitudes of people of the past who have been willing to stake everything for eternity upon this Christ who *cannot save if the dead rise not!* If Christ be not risen, they have blundered terribly. It would be better for us to take the path of least resistance, and to go on and enjoy this world. "They also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished."

In Verse 19, the Apostle Paul made this statement: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." Verses 20-28 then form a parenthesis in which the Apostle turns aside from his argument to give us an outline concerning the parade of resurrections and God's plan for the future. In Verse 29, he picks up the thread of his argument again from Verse 19. His argument is, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied. Else what shall they do who are baptized in place of the dead ones, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized in place of the dead ones?" Paul's thought is, "What shall they do which are baptized in the place of the dead ones if no dead ever rise? Why are they then baptized in the place of the dead ones? And why stand we in jeopardy (in danger of our lives) every hour?"

Do you follow his argument? Those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished *if* Christ has not been raised again. Yet everyday, other people are being baptized (and baptism is a *public* profession of faith in Christ) in the place of those who have died. They are filling up the places made vacant on earth by those who have died professing Christ. However, if Christ has not been raised from the dead, then those who have died are actually lost. They have gained nothing by their profession. Why then, should we go on filling up the ranks (down through the centuries) and putting other

people in the place of danger — if there is nothing to be gained by it?

The Koine Greek is a military language, and Paul is presenting a military figure. He has already likened the “parade of resurrections” to a column of marching soldiers. “But every man in his own *cohort*: Christ the firstfruits; afterwards they that are Christ’s at His coming.” Paul’s argument makes further use of military concepts.

A regiment of soldiers is sent into battle, and they suffer loss. When the battle is over, the men are counted and many are found to have been slain. Immediately the captain looks for replacements, and begins to recruit others in place of his dead ones. These are not intended to accomplish any benefit for the dead ones. Rather, they are recruited *in place of* the dead ones. They put on the same uniforms and go out to take part in other conflicts. However, if they are fighting a losing battle, if there is no possibility of ever winning, if they are just wasting their lives, why are they then recruited *for the dead*? What is the use of their taking the places of those who have died? It is pure stupidity if these replacements know that there is nothing but certain defeat and destruction awaiting them!

Paul is thinking of Christian people as being a mighty army for Christ in this world. Down through the centuries, this army has been in conflict. Throughout the years of this age of grace, one generation of Christians has fallen and another has taken its place. The public way that the “new recruits” make known their enlistment in the army of Christ is through baptism. Paul is pointing out that it is a rather foolish thing to follow this practice if Christ be not risen, and if the dead rise not. What have they gained by a public profession of faith? What have they gained by being baptized in place of the dead ones?

In Paul’s day, a public profession of faith in Christ placed one in great jeopardy of his life. Since the time of Paul, there have been other occasions when this has been true. If there is

nothing to be gained by one's baptism, then why go through a ceremony that would brand one publicly as a follower of Christ? It is a foolish thing to put one's life in jeopardy, if there is nothing to be gained by it.

The literal translation of Paul's words of Verse 31 is, "Daily I die, by our boasting, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord." Because of the opposition to Christian ministry, the Apostle Paul literally faced death each day of his life. He faced this danger because he "boasted" in the things that were the Gospel he preached.

The "boasting" that put him in this danger included the facts of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. He made continual public manifestation of his faith in Christ, and because of this said, "I die daily." Why should Paul act thusly if his message was untrue? What could he possibly gain?

"If after the manner of men I have fought with the beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? Let us eat and drink? for to morrow we die." Paul is further illustrating his point concerning the foolishness of all Christian profession, *if* the truth of resurrection is denied. He points out that he had actually been engaged in serious combat over the Gospel with brutish men in the city at Ephesus, an example of his "daily death," caused by his profession of faith in Christ. And he asks, "What advantage is it to me if a part of the Gospel that I preached is untrue? What advantage is it to me if the dead rise not? I would be much better off following the philosophy of the heathen. I should simply be gratifying the appetites of the flesh. We should all follow this philosophy. Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die. If the dead rise not, then death is final. That is the end of things. Let us enjoy life while we have it." Once again, Paul points to the serious consequences of denying the resurrection of the body.

"Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners." Having made his point, Paul now speaks out abruptly to his readers. He says, "Do not be deceived by false

teaching. It is a serious thing to be misled on such a basic point as bodily resurrection. Evil communications (false teachings) corrupt good manners (behavior). The believing of false teaching can actually corrupt a believer's way of life, as I have just illustrated. One cannot have a false view of resurrection without it destroying his Christian walk."

The alternative is given in Verse 34: "Awake to righteousness, and sin not." The Apostle to the Gentiles is saying, "Awake to the truth of the Gospel I preached. Believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, and believe that His resurrection is the earnest of our own. With this knowledge, you will have the power to avoid the effects of sin in your life. Evil communications corrupt good manners, but the awakening of truth breeds righteous behavior. Turn from these false teachers, and hear what I have to say."

"For some have not the knowledge of God." There were many in the Corinthian assembly who had succumbed to false teaching. They did not have true knowledge of God's Word, and were walking in heathen ways. They were not letting the righteousness of God show in their lives, but were failures in their witnessing — because they had let evil communications corrupt their daily lives. Paul simply admonishes them, "I speak this to your shame."

Throughout the centuries, there have been many believers in Christ who have stood in need of this message. The Christian's place is to fill the ranks vacated by those who have gone on before. He cannot properly accomplish this task without a correct understanding of the doctrine of bodily resurrection. Only that belief makes secure our blessed hope in Christ Jesus!

6. The Nature of the Resurrection Body

“But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (1 Corinthians 15:35-49).

In the preceding part of this chapter, the Apostle Paul has established the *fact* of bodily resurrection. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is an event of history, the sign given by God to authenticate the Gospel message. He was raised from the dead; His body came forth from that garden tomb in resurrection life. He has “become the firstfruits of them

that slept." His resurrection is the earnest of our own. In God's own time, the "dead in Christ" will also experience the resurrection of the body.

In this part of his letter, Paul turns to the consideration of resurrection itself, and of the resurrection body. The Apostle begins this section by asking two questions. The two questions are contained in Verse 35; and Verses 36-49 consider the answers to these questions.

What were the two questions? Paul says, "But some one will say, how are the dead raised up?" Secondly, "With what manner of body do they come?" Notice, the second question reveals the unbelief in resurrection as held by some of those who were to receive this letter. It actually accounts for the first question, "How are the dead raised?" Both of these questions are concerned with the *manner*, rather than the *fact*, of resurrection. In the minds of those to whom he is writing, the *fact* is denied, because the *manner* is not understood. The inability of the Corinthians to comprehend the manner or the method of the resurrection had resulted in a denial of its possibility. They were saying, "We cannot understand how, and therefore we do not believe, the thing can take place." This is precisely why Paul brings up the questions.

Look at these questions that Paul says that some will ask. The first is, "How are the dead raised?" i.e., in what way are the dead raised up? Death is seen as the decay and corruption of the body. That is the way these Corinthian people saw it. When someone died, the process of disintegration would immediately set in. Soon the entire physical body would be dust; it would be returned to the dust; it would be scattered. The corruption of a dead body could be observed. How could that body, disintegrated as it evidently is, ever be reconstructed? How? This is a natural question. (*Natural* is the right word; it is a question of the *natural* man!) As Paul anticipated, many people ask that question today. Think of all the human bodies that have corrupted away in their graves, not to mention those who have been cremated. How can there be reconstruction; How can resurrection take place?

The second question emphasizes the difficulties of the first. "With what body?" What kind of body will result from reconstruction? "With what manner of body do they come?" Will it be exactly the same as the body that died? We can see the conclusion in the minds of those who asked such questions: "There can be no resurrection. There can be no gathering together of those disintegrated bodies." One cannot imagine living bodies resulting from a mess like that; and therefore, some rationalize that there is no resurrection.

Now Paul turns to answer the questions. His first words are, "Thou unthinking one!" The word "fool" here is rather strong. Fools, here, is not used in the same sense as we use the word. Paul is not insulting his readers. The Greek word actually means "simpleton," or "unthinking one."

"Unthinking ones, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die." If we only stop to think about it, we will realize that there are in nature many analogies to the resurrection. Paul brings up one here. He uses the illustration of a farmer sowing grain. He says that when grain is sown in the earth, the new living plant cannot come forth until that seed has experienced disintegration (death). The original seed must corrupt away before life sprouts forth. It is not the shell of the planted seed that comes forth, but it is an *integrated living thing* patterned after that which was sown.

"And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain." It is not the young plant that is actually placed in the ground that is to sprout forth. For, in planting grain, the farmer does not sow young seedling plants. He sows only the bare *seed* of that which came from another living plant. This is true, whether the grain is wheat, barley, or corn. The method is the same. Only the bare grain — only the seed — is placed in the earth. That seed is expected to corrupt away before the new plant comes forth.

"But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body." It is the power of God that accomplishes the bringing of new life out of a bare seed. Paul

emphasized that every time a new plant comes from a buried seed, a miracle of God has been performed. Anything that concerns the giving of life always involves a creative miracle of God himself. "God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him." God was the original Designer of all plant life. In the beginning, He decided the type of plant body that was to belong to every specimen in each biological category. The stalk of wheat, the stalk of corn, and the stalk of barley *all* have unique characteristics of their *own*. God decided these characteristics at the time of the creation, and He recorded the pattern of His design in every bare seed that is produced by the living plant. When the seed disintegrates in the ground, that pattern determines the plant that is to sprout forth. Each variety of seed produces a plant of a specific type. "To every seed his own body."

Similarly, "All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds." As it is in the domain of plants, so it is in the domain of animal life. The bodies associated with all specimens of conscious life are all different. The basic "building block" of all flesh is that unit biologists call the "cell." Flesh is formed of a multitude of cells joined together. The internal structure of the cell is different for every variety of flesh. Because the cell structure is different, the resulting flesh is different also. Paul declares this truth when he says, "All flesh is not the same flesh."

"There is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds." Everyone recognizes this truth. Whether one is comparing the bodies of the living creatures, or the flesh that has been cut from the dead ones, it is obvious that the flesh is different. Anyone can recognize that the flesh of fish, or of poultry, is quite different from the flesh of the animals of the field. There are also differences in the flesh of the many types of domestic and wild animals. Biologists know that these differences in flesh types are traceable, down to the smallest components of the cell structure itself. The chromosome count in the DNA is different for each "kind" of animal. It is *impossible* for

animals with differing numbers of chromosomes to become mates for the purpose of producing offspring.

By the way, this statement of the Apostle Paul declares the impossibility of all life having come from a common ancestor, as the evolutionists would have us believe. There are differences in the flesh types of all the kinds of living creatures. These differing characteristics of the flesh prevent the crossing of the "kind" lines in the production of offspring. Thus, the flesh itself contains limitations that preclude any real evolution. The flesh of man differs from the flesh of all other living creatures.

However, Paul's major point here is that we observe differences in the various fleshly bodies that walk this earth. Therefore, we should anticipate that God would provide some differences between bodies that were designed for this present earth, and bodies that are designed for a heavenly existence. He says, "There are also celestial (heavenly) bodies, and bodies terrestrial (earthly): but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another." God does have a specific design for bodies that are fitted to a heavenly environment, just as He has a specific design (that differs from the bodies of all animals) for human bodies fitted for an earthly existence. The heavenly body can be expected to have its own unique splendor (this is what the word "glory" means as it is used here), just as the earthly body has its own unique splendor or manifestation. These two "splendors," or "outshowings," are not the same. "The splendor of the heavenly body is one thing, and the splendor of the earthly body is another thing."

"There is one outshowing of the sun, and another outshowing of the moon, and another outshowing of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in outward manifestation." With these words, Paul brings up another example of the differences in the design of God's handiwork. He looks to the second heaven, to the sphere that we call "space." He points to the obvious — that the various heavenly bodies observable from the earth also have unique, recognizable

characteristics. We regularly note the differences between the sun, the moon, and the various stars. We can even recognize the individual stars by their own splendor in the heavens. Each of these unique heavenly bodies was designed for its own specific purpose in the heavens: the design of each, therefore, was different. There are outward manifestations of these unique, designed features.

“So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body” (see 1 Corinthians 15:42-44).

The truth that Paul illustrates with his various examples applies to the resurrection of the body. Just as there are differences among the sun, moon, and various stars, there are also differences between the body that is planted in the earth and the body that will rise from the earth. “So also is the resurrection of the dead body.” That which comes forth from the grave will have different characteristics from that which was placed in the grave. “It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption.” The body that is placed in the grave is capable of corruption; that is, it will decay away — disintegrate. That has happened to all the bodies that are presently in graves. However, the body that comes forth from the grave will be incapable of ever corrupting away. It will never decay, nor disintegrate. It is indestructible.

“It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory.” The dead body (already beginning the process of decay) is placed in the grave as a thing of dishonour, ignominy, disgrace. There is nothing worthy of less honor than that dead flesh which was once the house of the soul and spirit of a living human being. That corrupting thing *must* be placed in the ground. However, it is raised in splendor, honor, renown. The resurrection body will be a thing of beauty, a thing worthy of great honor, and will manifest the glory of the God who designed it.

“It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.” The greatest display of the weakness of mortal flesh is the dead and corrupting body of one whose soul and spirit have departed. It is nothing but a mound of clay from which the breath of life is gone. It is in that condition of weakness that it is planted in the ground. Not so with the resurrection body! “It is raised in *power*.” The word translated “power” is the Greek “*dunamei*,” the word from which we get our word “*dynamite*.” Paul’s statement means that the resurrection body is capable of accomplishing tremendous works. Contrasting with the weakness of that which is sown, that which comes forth again is raised in “*dynamite*.”

“It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.” As the body is placed in the grave, it is like that of the first man, Adam — like the body inherited from him after he marred the image of God in which he was created. It is the body that became our possession by the natural birth; it is an earthly body.

That which comes out of the grave is no longer a natural body; but is a “spiritual” body. Paul is using the term “spiritual” here as the equivalent of the term “heavenly” (“*celestial*”) that he used in Verse 40. He is not implying that the resurrection body has no material composition; rather, he is saying that it is a body fitted for a heavenly existence. He therefore refers to it as a “spiritual” body.

The Lord Jesus Christ in His resurrection came forth from the tomb in a “spiritual” (“heavenly”) body, a body very definitely made up of material components. He said to His disciples, “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me have” (see Luke 24:39). It was a “spiritual” body, but a body of “flesh and bones.” The Lord was placed in the garden tomb in a natural body, but He came forth from that tomb in a spiritual body. It was the same body, though indeed it had undergone some remarkable changes. “There *is* a natural body, and there *is* a spiritual body.”

We know that the Lord's spiritual body did possess some remarkable characteristics not associated with a natural body. He could appear and disappear at will. He was able to pass through doors without opening them. He was able to consume food (although food was not necessary to sustain His body). He said that it was a body of "flesh and bones," but never mentioned "blood." Although "The life of the present natural body is in the blood," the life of the spiritual body is *not* sustained by the blood principle. The blood that the Lord poured out at the Cross was never returned to His resurrection body. Since our "spiritual" bodies are to be like His, then we can know that they also will not be sustained by blood.

"There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." Because of this fact, "It is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul." Paul is referring to Genesis 2:7: "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." That is when Adam received his natural body, and that kind of body was passed on to all his offspring. This is our heritage by the natural birth. Now, Paul adds to this, "The last Adam was made a quickening spirit." He designates the Lord Jesus Christ as the "last Adam," and He tells us that He became "a quickening spirit." That is, He was made a "life-giving-spirit." Paul has reference to the Lord's resurrection (or "spiritual") body. As we have pointed out, He became "the firstfruits of them that slept," and in this He also became the One who imparts life to our future resurrection bodies. The life of the natural body was inherited from the first Adam, and the life of the spiritual body is inherited from the last Adam.

Notice that Christ is designated as the "last Adam," not the "second Adam." If Paul had called Him the "second Adam," then we might have anticipated a "third Adam" coming to earth. The Lord Jesus Christ was the "last Adam." There are *no more* to come after Him.

Paul now reminds his readers of the sequence of the natural and the spiritual. "Howbeit (But) that was not first

which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual." God did not send Christ into the earth as the first man. Rather, it was Adam, the federal head of the natural human race, who was the first man in the earth. Similarly, the Lord Jesus Christ first had a natural body, a body designed after that of Adam. After His death and burial, He received a resurrection body, "that which is spiritual." This is the natural order that pertains to all of us. We live first in the natural body; then in God's own time we will receive a spiritual body.

The Bible is the story of two men: the first man and the Second Man. Every person who lives, or who has ever lived, in the earth, is "in" one of these two men. We are "in Adam" by the natural birth. We can become "in Christ," if we place our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and receive the spiritual "rebirth." Everyone in the earth can be considered as a part of one of these two men. Paul describes these two men in Verses 47 and 48.

"The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." The first man was designed for an earthly existence. When he disobeyed God, a curse was placed upon the earthly domain, and that curse extended to his body which was a part of that domain. Therefore, Adam is earthy. "The second man is the Lord from heaven." This is the Man, Christ Jesus. He became the "Second Man" when He came forth from the tomb in resurrection life. His body was separated from earthy things, and fitted for a heavenly existence. Paul identifies this One as "the Lord from heaven." He was speaking of this same One when He previously said, "and afterward that which is spiritual."

"As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy." Those who have never received Christ as their personal Saviour are still "in Adam." Because of this, they have Adam's characteristics, and they have Adam's hope. They are also "earthy," and fitted only for life in this earth. When that

life is over, they cannot ascend into the heavenlies; they are still a part of the first man, whose destiny is death and corruption.

“And as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.” Paul is speaking of the Lord in resurrection life when he says, “and as is the *heavenly*.” His body has undergone transformation to a heavenly body. We who know Him as our Saviour are “in Him.” We will someday have a body that is fitted for the heavenly environment, just as was the resurrection body of our Lord Jesus Christ. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (see 1 John 3:2). What a glorious hope we have!

“And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” Paul concludes his answers to the two questions about resurrection. He has answered the question, “How are the dead raised up?” The dead will be raised up by the power of the God who created all things. The resurrection of the body was in the plan of God from the beginning. By His omnipotent power, He is able to raise up a resurrection body according to the pattern that was contained in the corruptible body.

Paul has also answered the second question, “With what manner of body do they come?” They come forth in resurrection life with a heavenly body, with a spiritual body. This body is related to the natural body, but it is of entirely different characteristics. It is raised in splendor; it is raised fitted for a heavenly existence.

During our natural life span, we have borne the image of the first Adam. We have lived in a body of clay, in a mortal body capable only of death and decay. That body that we have borne in this world was the body bequeathed us by the first man, Adam. It is a body that is earthy. But we have the sure promise of God that we will also bear the image of the “heavenly One” (of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ) in the

world to come. We await our own resurrection, the time when this promise will be fulfilled!

7.

Transformation to Immortality

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:50-58).

With these words, the Apostle Paul brings to a close his in-depth teaching on the subject of the resurrection of the body. He has first dealt with the bodily resurrection of Christ, then with that of the “dead in Christ,” the saved ones of this present age. These are the ones cited in Verse 23 as he provided the order of the first two phases of the first resurrection. “But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.”

Paul has just dealt with the two questions asked by those who doubt the doctrine of bodily resurrection. “How are the dead raised up? With what body do they come?” The body

emphasized that every time a new plant comes from a buried seed, a miracle of God has been performed. Anything that concerns the giving of life always involves a creative miracle of God himself. "God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him." God was the original Designer of all plant life. In the beginning, He decided the type of plant body that was to belong to every specimen in each biological category. The stalk of wheat, the stalk of corn, and the stalk of barley *all* have unique characteristics of their *own*. God decided these characteristics at the time of the creation, and He recorded the pattern of His design in every bare seed that is produced by the living plant. When the seed disintegrates in the ground, that pattern determines the plant that is to sprout forth. Each variety of seed produces a plant of a specific type. "To every seed his own body."

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"It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power." The greatest display of the weakness of mortal flesh is the dead and corrupting body of one whose soul and spirit have departed. It is nothing but a mound of clay from which the breath of life is gone. It is in that condition of weakness that it is planted in the ground. Not so with the resurrection body! "It is raised in *power*." The word translated "power" is the Greek "dunamei," the word from which we get our word "dynamite." Paul's statement means that the resurrection body is capable of accomplishing tremendous works. Contrasting with the weakness of that which is sown, that which comes forth again is raised in "dynamite."

"It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." As the body is placed in the grave, it is like that of the first man, Adam — like the body inherited from him after he marred the image of God in which he was created. It is the body that became our possession by the natural birth; it is an earthly body.

That which comes out of the grave is no longer a natural body; but is a "spiritual" body. Paul is using the term "spiritual" here as the equivalent of the term "heavenly" ("celestial") that he used in Verse 40. He is not implying that the resurrection body has no material composition; rather, he is saying that it is a body fitted for a heavenly existence. He therefore refers to it as a "spiritual" body.

The Lord Jesus Christ in His resurrection came forth from the tomb in a "spiritual" ("heavenly") body, a body very definitely made up of material components. He said to His disciples, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me have" (see Luke 24:39). It was a "spiritual" body, but a body of "flesh and bones." The Lord was placed in the garden tomb in a natural body, but He came forth from that tomb in a spiritual body. It was the same body, though indeed it had undergone some remarkable changes. "There *is* a natural body, and there *is* a spiritual body."

We know that the Lord's spiritual body did possess some remarkable characteristics not associated with a natural body. He could appear and disappear at will. He was able to pass through doors without opening them. He was able to consume food (although food was not necessary to sustain His body). He said that it was a body of "flesh and bones," but never mentioned "blood." Although "The life of the present natural body is in the blood," the life of the spiritual body is *not* sustained by the blood principle. The blood that the Lord poured out at the Cross was never returned to His resurrection body. Since our "spiritual" bodies are to be like His, then we can know that they also will not be sustained by blood.

"There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." Because of this fact, "It is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul." Paul is referring to Genesis 2:7: "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." That is when Adam received his natural body, and that kind of body was passed on to all his offspring. This is our heritage by the natural birth. Now, Paul adds to this, "The last Adam was made a quickening spirit." He designates the Lord Jesus Christ as the "last Adam," and He tells us that He became "a quickening spirit." That is, He was made a "life-giving-spirit." Paul has reference to the Lord's resurrection (or "spiritual") body. As we have pointed out, He became "the firstfruits of them that slept," and in this He also became the One who imparts life to our future resurrection bodies. The life of the natural body was inherited from the first Adam, and the life of the spiritual body is inherited from the last Adam.

Notice that Christ is designated as the "last Adam," not the "second Adam." If Paul had called Him the "second Adam," then we might have anticipated a "third Adam" coming to earth. The Lord Jesus Christ was the "last Adam." There are *no more* to come after Him.

Paul now reminds his readers of the sequence of the natural and the spiritual. "Howbeit (But) that was not first

which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual." God did not send Christ into the earth as the first man. Rather, it was Adam, the federal head of the natural human race, who was the first man in the earth. Similarly, the Lord Jesus Christ first had a natural body, a body designed after that of Adam. After His death and burial, He received a resurrection body, "that which is spiritual." This is the natural order that pertains to all of us. We live first in the natural body; then in God's own time we will receive a spiritual body.

The Bible is the story of two men: the first man and the Second Man. Every person who lives, or who has ever lived, in the earth, is "in" one of these two men. We are "in Adam" by the natural birth. We can become "in Christ," if we place our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and receive the spiritual "rebirth." Everyone in the earth can be considered as a part of one of these two men. Paul describes these two men in Verses 47 and 48.

"The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." The first man was designed for an earthly existence. When he disobeyed God, a curse was placed upon the earthly domain, and that curse extended to his body which was a part of that domain. Therefore, Adam is earthy. "The second man is the Lord from heaven." This is the Man, Christ Jesus. He became the "Second Man" when He came forth from the tomb in resurrection life. His body was separated from earthy things, and fitted for a heavenly existence. Paul identifies this One as "the Lord from heaven." He was speaking of this same One when He previously said, "and afterward that which is spiritual."

"As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy." Those who have never received Christ as their personal Saviour are still "in Adam." Because of this, they have Adam's characteristics, and they have Adam's hope. They are also "earthy," and fitted only for life in this earth. When that

life is over, they cannot ascend into the heavenlies; they are still a part of the first man, whose destiny is death and corruption.

“And as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.” Paul is speaking of the Lord in resurrection life when he says, “and as is the *heavenly*.” His body has undergone transformation to a heavenly body. We who know Him as our Saviour are “in Him.” We will someday have a body that is fitted for the heavenly environment, just as was the resurrection body of our Lord Jesus Christ. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (see 1 John 3:2). What a glorious hope we have!

“And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” Paul concludes his answers to the two questions about resurrection. He has answered the question, “How are the dead raised up?” The dead will be raised up by the power of the God who created all things. The resurrection of the body was in the plan of God from the beginning. By His omnipotent power, He is able to raise up a resurrection body according to the pattern that was contained in the corruptible body.

Paul has also answered the second question, “With what manner of body do they come?” They come forth in resurrection life with a heavenly body, with a spiritual body. This body is related to the natural body, but it is of entirely different characteristics. It is raised in splendor; it is raised fitted for a heavenly existence.

During our natural life span, we have borne the image of the first Adam. We have lived in a body of clay, in a mortal body capable only of death and decay. That body that we have borne in this world was the body bequeathed us by the first man, Adam. It is a body that is earthy. But we have the sure promise of God that we will also bear the image of the “heavenly One” (of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ) in the

world to come. We await our own resurrection, the time when this promise will be fulfilled!

7.

Transformation to Immortality

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:50-58).

With these words, the Apostle Paul brings to a close his in-depth teaching on the subject of the resurrection of the body. He has first dealt with the bodily resurrection of Christ, then with that of the “dead in Christ,” the saved ones of this present age. These are the ones cited in Verse 23 as he provided the order of the first two phases of the first resurrection. “But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.”

Paul has just dealt with the two questions asked by those who doubt the doctrine of bodily resurrection. “How are the dead raised up? With what body do they come?” The body

The End