

- b) Even as the resurrection forms the point of demarcation between the old and new aeons, so it also delineates the *First Adam* and the *Last Adam*. For as Adam was the point of origination for man under the old aeon, so Christ is the point of origination for man under the new aeon, which origination and final consummation are established and secured by His resurrection from the dead.

More than anywhere else in his epistles Paul addressed this topic in 1 Corinthians 15. Since the context focuses upon the fact and nature of Christ's resurrection and its implications for those who are joined to Him, it is not surprising that it provides important insight into Paul's assertion in Romans 1:4 that the resurrection marked Him out as the Son of God with power "*according to the spirit of holiness.*"

Central to his argument is his characterization of Adam as the natural (*psychical*) man and Christ as the spiritual (*pneumatic*) man. This being so, it is impossible to follow Paul's developing thought without first understanding what he meant by this terminology. At first glance it may seem that the terms contrast the *physical* and *spiritual* as two qualities inherent in man as a creature, or that they represent man as either *carnal* or *spiritual*. In fact, neither of these is correct, for Paul intends them to identify the two modes of existence that characterize the two aeons of the *flesh* and the *Spirit*; the former being associated with the First Adam, the *psychical man*, and the latter with Christ, the Last Adam, the *pneumatic Man* (cf. 20-22, 35-50).

- The First Adam "*became a living soul,*" and in this way was the point of origination for the race of men sharing his likeness. The body and mode of existence derived from him are *earthy*, as he himself was "from the earth" (15:45-48). Thus the inhabitants of the old aeon are said by Paul to possess a *natural body* incapable of entering the new aeon. This is because this body is perishable, sown in weakness and dishonor; it cannot inherit the kingdom (15:42-50).
- Conversely, the Last Adam "*became a life-giving spirit.*" Unlike the former man, this man is not earthy but *heavenly*. He, too, is the point of origination for those who bear His likeness and will participate in His resurrection, those who inhabit the new aeon of the Spirit: "*Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly*" (15:49). And as the nature of His humanity is *heavenly* rather than *earthy*, so the body associated with this humanity is *spiritual* rather than *natural* (15:42-44).

These considerations make it evident that the issue in Paul's argumentation in this passage is one of *redemptive-historical distinction*. This means that his categories of *earthy/natural* and *heavenly/spiritual* in relation to Adam and Christ respectively cannot be understood as merely representing the *physical* realm in contrast to the *spiritual*. The context reveals that these categories describe the two realities associated with the old and new aeons; *specifically, the two modes of human existence associated with the two men who stand at the head of the two ages demarcated by Christ's resurrection from the dead.*

That Paul's point of distinction is not between the physical and the spiritual becomes all the more obvious when it is recalled that his whole argument proceeded upon the fact of Jesus' *bodily* resurrection. Some among the Corinthians were denying the very principle of physical resurrection (15:12, 35), and Paul used the fact of Christ's resurrection to refute them. Jesus Christ, the resurrected, spiritual (*pneumatic*) man is characterized by a true, physical body as much as is Adam, the natural (*psychical*) man. *But at the same time, their respective physical bodies differ in that they are fitted to inhabit two distinct aeons, the first aeon marked by mortality, corruption, and death, and second by immortality, incorruptibility, and life.*

And as Christ's resurrection provides the point of demarcation between these two ages, two realities, and two modes of human existence, *so the movement from the one to the other is attributed by Paul to the power and work of the Spirit*. It is because of the centrality of the Spirit in this redemptive-historical transformation that Paul refers to the realities of the new aeon as being *spiritual* (vv. 42-54). It is also the reason for Paul's reference to Christ as a "*life-giving Spirit*" (v. 45).

- By referring to Jesus in this way Paul was not saying that He has become a heavenly "living spirit" in contrast to Adam who was an earthy, physical "living soul."
- Nor was He making a distinction between *soul* and *spirit* as alleged lower and higher principles by which man is defined - the former identifying man's nature as a rational creature and the latter his spiritual status as the unique bearer of the divine image.
- Even less did he mean that Jesus was "remade" into a purely spiritual being following His resurrection as some cultists insist.

*“Paul does not in general set Christ as ‘living Spirit’ over against Adam as living soul, but says that Christ has **become** life-giving Spirit. Just as with Adam, this last denotes a beginning, which in this context is scarcely to be understood otherwise than of Christ’s resurrection. From then on Christ not only ‘had’ the Spirit, but he himself ‘was’ the Spirit (cf. 2 Cor. 3:17), which is not to say that there would no longer be a distinction between the subject of Christ and of the Spirit, but that not only for himself but also for his own he has the Spirit at his disposal. Therefore Paul speaks of Christ as the life-giving Spirit, by which he again establishes the relation between the Spirit and the resurrection in Christ. For this reason belonging to Christ not only consists in the gift of the ‘pneuma’ in this life, but reaches out to the still to be expected quickening in accordance with Christ’s resurrection (cf. v. 22).”*  
(Ridderbos, Paul: An Outline of His Theology)

Paul’s point in 1 Corinthians 15:45 was that, even as Christ’s resurrection came about by the powerful working of the Spirit, so in His resurrection Jesus is now intimately tied to the Spirit. The Spirit is now uniquely the *Spirit of Christ* (Romans 8:9): the One sent by Christ to reveal Him and produce His life and likeness in men (John 14:16-20, 26, 15:26-16:15; 2 Corinthians 3:1-18; cf. Acts 1:1-8, 2:1-21). He is Christ’s *earnest* to men, His indwelling presence guaranteeing their inheritance with Him (Romans 5:1-5, 8:12-27; Ephesians 1:13-14). As the power of the Spirit instituted the new aeon with Christ’s resurrection, so also His power brings Jesus’ brethren into it by the new birth and secures them in it for the day of their own resurrection at the Parousia of their Lord.

The central role of the Spirit in the new aeon was foundational to Paul’s christology and eschatology, and must not be overlooked in discerning the meaning of his phrase in Romans 1:4, “*according to the spirit of holiness.*” Yet far too often this is precisely the case.

- Some, noting the absence of the definite article with the noun *spirit*, have reasoned that Paul was using this term in the sense of a principle, attitude, or condition. They conclude that Paul’s meaning was that Christ’s resurrection in power was in accordance with the principle of *authentic holiness* that had defined His humanity and enabled Him to be a suitable substitute for sinful men.
- Others, as already indicated, have understood Paul to have been speaking of the two natures of Jesus Christ: *a man descended from David according to the flesh and the divine Son of God according to the spirit of holiness.*

The latter view rightly recognizes that the phrase, “*according to the spirit of holiness*,” is explicitly set in parallel with the previous prepositional phrase, “*according to the flesh*,” and that Paul’s meaning must be understood in relation to it. But because it fails to grasp the true significance of the first phrase it also misses the meaning of the second one.

It has been seen that the former phrase is to be viewed from a redemptive-historical standpoint. It identifies Jesus Christ as having entered the world as a man born under the curse of the old aeon of the “flesh” in order to bring it to its end, and as the promised Son of David, establish and rule over the aeon of the kingdom of God. Further, it was His resurrection from the dead that marked Him out as the Son of God with power; the Second Adam who inaugurated and stands at the head of the age of the kingdom that is according to the Spirit of holiness. *Consistent with Paul’s theology as considered from 1 Corinthians 15, the two parallel prepositional phrases are markers specifying the two ages of redemptive history: the one defined by Paul as “according to the flesh” and the other as “according to the Spirit.”*

So also in the prophets, as the coming of the kingdom of God was associated with the emergence of David’s regal seed, it was linked by them with the *outpouring of the Spirit* and His work of renewal. The Spirit had been the instrumental agent of the first creation (Genesis 1:1-2), and He would be with the new creation as well. As the kingdom of David’s son was to be a kingdom defined by comprehensive renewal, it was to be a kingdom uniquely associated with the power and presence of Yahweh’s Spirit.

Because of its relevance to Adam’s fallen race, the promise of the Spirit in relation to the kingdom of God is most associated in the Old Testament with God’s stated intention to purify and set apart a people for His own possession (Isaiah 44:1-5; Ezekiel 11:16-20, 36:16-32; Joel 2:28-29). By His Spirit Yahweh would transform men in such a way that their righteousness and obedience would not be merely external, but rooted within their hearts as spiritually enlivened and restored image bearers (Ezekiel 37:1-14).

The prophets promised that the Spirit would purge men of the defilement and guilt of sin, remove the “death” of alienation, and give to them a “new heart.” As a result, they would be Yahweh’s people and He would be their God. Moreover, the Spirit was to exercise God’s power in the renewal and recovery of the entire cosmos. The promised kingdom of the new aeon was to ultimately embrace the whole created order, even as had the former age.

The Old Testament language and imagery of the Spirit as the agent of the new creation is carried forward by Paul later in the Romans epistle, particularly as it relates to the doctrine of *sonship*.

- 1) The gift of the Holy Spirit secures the saints' hope, for He testifies in their hearts of God's sure and unfailing love for them, the love that is the eternal basis of their election and predestination (5:1-5, 8:28-39; cf. Ephesians 1:3-6).
- 2) As the Spirit's presence testifies to the saints of God's love for them, so He accomplishes their indissoluble union with Christ. He is the **Spirit of Christ** who reveals Christ in them and conforms them to Him (8:9; Philippians 1:19-20).
- 3) By that union the Christian is placed "in Christ," gaining the atoning efficacy of His cross in justification and the imputation of His righteousness. As a result, he enters into the "rest" that is reconciliation and peace with God. For this reason the Spirit is called by Paul the **Spirit of life** (8:1-4), for He is the One whose effectual power in the soul puts an end to the alienation and hostility of *death*. What Christ accomplished, the Spirit applies.
- 4) Most importantly in Paul's theology, the Spirit is the **Spirit of adoption**. His role is to apply the justifying and sanctifying merits of Christ to His people, join them to their Savior, and bring to completion their transformation into His image (2 Corinthians 3:17-18). And in so doing He makes them to be true *sons* in the Son.

This work of the Spirit has two aspects. The first is *objective*, as He is the earnest whose presence guarantees for the saint his inheritance as a joint heir with Christ (Galatians 4:1-7; Ephesians 1:13-14); He is the **Spirit of promise**. The second is *subjective*, for He "*bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God*" (8:15-17).

- c) Appropriate to his thorough disclosure of the Christ of his gospel, Paul referred to Him summarily as "*Jesus Christ our Lord*": **Jesus** expressing His role as Savior (Matthew 1:21); **Christ** His Messianic status as Yahweh's anointed Servant and Redeemer (Isaiah 61:1-3; Daniel 9:24-27); and **Lord** His infinite, unending authority and dominion - first as God's *Son* (Psalm 2), and then as His *Lamb* (Matthew 28:18; 1 Corinthians 15:25-27; Ephesians 1:18-23; Philippians 2:1-11). Paul could not have better captured the glory of the angel's annunciation to Mary (Luke 1:26-33).