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1 Corinthians

It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. 1 Corinthians 15:44

Paul continues with his explanation of the resurrection body. Still referring to the example of a seed he says that, "It is sown a natural body." Seeds are sown; the corrupt and weak bodies of the dead are buried. This is its natural state and this is what is placed into the ground. Just like all of the animals of the earth, they live a certain amount of time, they age, and then they die and return to the soil from which they came. However, for the believer in Christ, the body that was sown will have a marvelous change. Paul says that, "it is raised a spiritual body."

It has to be noted that it doesn't say a "spirit body." This would be contradictory to a literal, bodily resurrection. The body which is raised is "spiritual" not "spirit." Misunderstanding this, or purposefully changing the intent and meaning (as for example the Jehovah's Witnesses do), leads to heresy. Christ was raised with a literal, physical body. He made this abundantly clear when He ate among the apostles and even asked them to touch Him. He was showing that His body, in fact, was literal and physical. As we will be like Him in nature (not deity, but body) we will also have a literal, physical body.

To ensure his words are perfectly comprehended, he repeats the thought saying, "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." In an emphatic way, Paul is showing here that there are two bodies for the believer. We have one like a seed which dies, and yet there is another which sprouts from that decay to be like a plant. It is different in form and yet it has all the same life of the original. Our spiritual body will not rely on the natural order that we now know for its

continuance. Rather we will derive our continuance from our spiritual reconnection to God through the power of the resurrection.

Life application: What God has promised He is fully capable of fulfilling. Know and understand that we will have a literal body and it will never wear out. It will be spiritual, not natural, in nature.

And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. 1 Corinthians 15:45

In the previous verse, Paul noted that, "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." In support of this, he returns to Scripture to establish that this is an indisputable truth. Here he cites the Greek version of the Old Testament from a portion of 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 being."

He adds into the thought the words "first" and "Adam" to show the contrast between our first father, Adam, and our Redeemer, Christ. Even though Jesus isn't mentioned directly in this verse, it is obvious that he is substituting His name for the term "the last Adam." It is similar to what he submits in Romans 5:19 -

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous."

These contrasts are given to show us a distinction between our mortal, human nature and our anticipated eternal nature through the work of God in Christ. God breathed life into the mortal man, Adam. At that time, there was no anticipation of death, but there is also the truth that he was fashioned from the dust and is thus closely connected to it. After his creation, he was told that there would be

consequences for disobedience. The account goes on to show that he disobeyed and he "died." This was first a spiritual death; a spiritual disconnect from God. This eventually led to his physical death as well.

In contrast to this sad state (which is inherited by all of Adam's fallen seed) there is Christ, "the last Adam." He was not born with Adam's inherited sin and He lived in sinless perfection under God's law. Having paid the price for the sins of man through His death, He "*became* a life-giving spirit." Paul speaks of this in Romans 8:11 -

"But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you."

As Matthew Poole says of this verse, "Adam was the first, with respect of natural and carnal propagation, so Christ was the last Head, in respect of grace and spiritual regeneration, he was made a quickening spirit."

Life application: We still bear Adam's fallen nature. Until this corruptible body is done away with, we struggle against the flesh and the weaknesses of this life. However, for those who have called on Christ, these things are already defeated and are only awaiting their final realization. Be fully confident that whatever weaknesses and temptations you face now, they will be done away with when Christ comes to change us and bring us to Himself.

However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual.
1 Corinthians 15:46

Speaking of the process of the resurrection and the order of it, Paul now explicitly states a truth to consider which confirms what he has been saying. There is an

order to the progression of man (not meaning all men, but those who will be of the resurrection).

Earlier in 1 Corinthians 15:21-23 Paul spoke of this order which has been ordained. Included in it is not only resurrection to life, but a different category of life than what we currently understand. There was first "the natural." Adam was created as a living being, being brought from the dust. He was given free will and he (known to God before it happened) exercised that free will. In doing so, corruption ensued. This is the state of the natural.

However, for those who will participate in the resurrection, like the seed which changes into something else, we too will change. It will be from "the natural" into "the spiritual." This is the process which God ordained for the order of things. Whereas the natural was of decay and death, the spiritual will be of eternal vigor and life.

Life application: What we perceive now will be put away and something far better than we can imagine will replace it. Whatever is coming, it will be glorious!

The first man *was* of the earth, *made* of dust; the second Man *is* the Lord from heaven. 1 Corinthians 15:47

Paul has been speaking of the body of believers in their current state as well as their bodies to come. He continues with that now. To compliment what he said in the previous verse, he enters this thought. Speaking of Adam, he says, "The first man *was* of the earth, *made* of dust." Adam is wholly earthly; he came from the earth and his body is suited for life on the earth. The earth is perishable and thus Adam is also perishable.

In contrast to this is the Lord Jesus. He is "the second Man." Paul is not saying that Adam existed before the Lord, but that in the order of redemptive history, and thus the order of the body of the believer, we follow this pattern. Even Jesus

followed this pattern, coming in human flesh and participating in His creation. It is the pattern which Paul is focusing on. First came Adam; next comes Christ. First came the natural; next comes the spiritual. First came the earthly; next comes the heavenly.

The Greek gives extra hints concerning the nature of the heavenly body. Citing Meyer, Vincent's Word Studies notes that, "no predicate in this second clause corresponds to the earthy of the first half of the verse, because the material of the glorified body of Christ transcends alike conception and expression.' The phrase includes both the divine origin and the heavenly nature; and its reference, determined by the line of the whole argument, is to the glorified body of Christ - the Lord who shall descend from heaven in His glorified body."

To Paul it is an axiom that Adam stands as the representative of the entire earthly human race. He was created and earthly and thus all who issue from him bear that same image. Likewise, the Lord is the Head and Representative of all of His spiritual children. Therefore, we (meaning believers in Christ) will participate in His heavenly nature, just as we have participated in Adam's earthly nature. John gives an insight into this in his first epistle -

"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." 1 John 3:2

Life application: As surely as we bear Adam's image because we are of Adam, we shall bear Christ's image because we are now in Christ. Don't despair, but be prepared to be amazed.

As was the *man* of dust, so also *are* those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly *Man*, so also *are* those who are heavenly. 1 Corinthians 15:48

Paul has just made statements of fact concerning the state of man in regards to Adam and in regards to the Lord. In verse 46 he said, "...the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual." Then in verse 47 he noted that, "The first man *was* of the earth, *made* of dust; the second Man *is* the Lord from heaven." Verse 48 now further explains verse 47. Verse 46 will be further explained in verse 49.

Adam was of the earth, made of dust. Logically then it follows that, "As was the *man* of dust, so also *are* those who are made of dust." All who are "in Adam" are like Adam. Everything follows after its own kind. Pumpkins don't come from whales nor do papayas come from mangos. As Adam is earthly, it naturally follows that all who issue from him will be earthly as well.

Likewise, we can take it as an axiom that just "as is the heavenly *Man*, so also *are* those who are heavenly." Christ is "the heavenly *Man*," and therefore all who are of Christ are also of the "heavenly."

Paul states this as a fact based on verse 47. In the next verse, he will show what that means to those who are "in Christ."

Life application: If you are in Christ, you are in Christ. Nothing can change this. He cannot deny Himself. If you falter in your walk with Him, you may lose rewards, but your salvation is not in question. Be confident that God's eternal grace and mercy in Christ are greater than your temporary failings.

And as we have borne the image of the *man* of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly *Man*. 1 Corinthians 15:49

This verse further explains verse 46 which said, "However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual." Adam is the "natural" whom Paul is referring to. He was created from the dust and was earthly. As we are descendants of Adam, we bear his image. This means that we are also of the dust. It is an obvious truth that all people know and understand. When our lives end, we quickly decay and return to the earth from which we came. But there is good news for the believer in Christ!

Just "as we have borne the image of the *man* of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly *Man*." This does not mean all humans, but rather only those who have called on Christ. We are now "positionally" in Christ even though we don't yet actually bear His image. Eventually, we will bear His image; a reality which means that we will never again see decay or corruption. What He is like, we shall also be like. As our current body is suited to the earth and is tied to our relationship to Adam, our future body will be suited to heaven and will be tied to our relationship to Christ.

It should be noted that some translations say "let us also bear" rather than "we shall also bear." This comes from a variant reading in some manuscripts, but this does not flow with the rest of Paul's words in the surrounding verses. He is not exhorting us, but rather teaching us. His words in this chapter are an explanation of the issue. It is true that because we are "in Christ" we should act in that manner, but regardless of whether we do or to what level we do, we shall in fact bear the image of Christ, the heavenly Man.

Life application: Christ rose from the dead, never to see corruption. He possesses a resurrection body which is glorious and suited for eternity. We shall be changed to be like this as well. What occurs here is temporary and will pass. What is coming will be eternal and it will be glorious. Don't lose hope, but rather cling to the truth that is presented in the Bible concerning our future state.

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 1 Corinthians 15:50

In verse 35 Paul noted that, "... someone will say, 'How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?'" He has been answering this question since then by making analogies that we can comprehend based on our knowledge of things. However, an entirely new revelation is given from him which is not based on analogy. Rather, it is given as a statement of fact. His words, "Now I say, brethren..." mean that he is adamant about his thoughts and they are words directed specifically to believers.

"Flesh and blood" is a term which is set against, "flesh and bone." According to Genesis 9:4 (and a principle taught many times after that in Scripture), the life is in the blood. When Jesus died on the cross, His blood was shed. This was the necessary evidence to prove His death. After the resurrection, He used the term "flesh and bones" when showing Himself to the apostles -

"Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have." Luke 24:39

This same basic terminology was used by Adam when Eve was created -

"This *is* now bone of my bones
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man." Genesis 2:23

These words, "bone" and "flesh," are used quite a few more times in Scripture to indicate identification between individuals. The last time it is used is in Ephesians 5:30 when speaking of the relationship of believers within the body of Christ -

"For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones."

However, the words "flesh" and "blood" are used when speaking of Jesus' earthly ministry; a ministry which is now complete. That is found explained in Hebrews 2:14 -

"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil."

The "flesh and blood" is corruptible and this state "cannot inherit the kingdom of God." Whatever our bodies will be like, the Bible shows that they will be a different than what we now possess. This is why Paul is so careful to show us that our corruption will not inherit incorruption.

Life application: Our current bodies, as marvelous as they are, are weak and corruptible. The blood which runs through our veins will someday be replaced with a new life force, a life force which will allow us to continue on through all eternity. Hold fast to the truth that God has it all under control and that what He has promised will come about just as it is written!

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—
1 Corinthians 15:51

This verse and the next one to come are "rapture" verses. They provide details that, when taken with the other rapture verses of the New Testament, show us the general order in which the rapture will occur within the framework of the greater panorama of redemptive history. Paul's words here are descriptive in the sense that they depict what will occur. However, they are to be taken literally. One must have rapture theology trained out of them to deny a literal rendering of what they say. When taken at face value they are clear and obvious.

Paul first begins with "Behold." The word is *horao*. According to Helps Word Studies it means "properly, see, often with *metaphorical* meaning: "to see with

the mind" (i.e. spiritually see), i.e. perceive (with inward spiritual perception)." This is just what Paul intends with the use of the word because he next says, "I tell you a mystery."

This word, mystery, is *mustérion*. In addition to meaning "mystery" it carries the connotation of a "secret, of which initiation is necessary; in the NT: the counsels of God, once hidden but now revealed in the Gospel or some fact thereof; the Christian revelation generally; particular truths or details of the Christian revelation." In other words, Paul is now explaining something that, until he revealed it to those at Corinth, was completely unknown except to him. It had been revealed to him by God and he was now passing it on for the edification and instruction of the Corinthians, and thus us as well!

And this mystery which is now revealed is that, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed..." The meaning is obvious on its surface. Not all believers in Christ will die a physical death (Paul uses the Christian concept of "sleep" to mean "physical death"), but will instead be transformed immediately from the "earthly" to the "heavenly" body that he described earlier.

Paul will continue with his rapture theology to the Corinthians in the next verse and then he will explain why this will occur and the hope which it signifies. In this, other than the fact that there will be living Christians at the time of the event, no specifics concerning that timing are given in this epistle. Rather, it must be discerned by uniting these words with those in other areas of the New Testament.

Life application: Rapture theology is often spoken against by Christian fuddyduddies. Don't be a Christian fuddyduddy. Instead, accept what the Bible says at face value and know that the Lord will bring the people of His church to Himself. It is the blessed hope of the faithful.

...in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.
1 Corinthians 15:52

In the previous verse, Paul explained that, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." Now to provide detailed insight into this marvelous event, he says that it will come about "in a moment." The word he uses is *atomos*, which is where we get our word "atom" from. It is only used this one time in the New Testament and it comes from the prefix *a* which means "not," and *temno* which means "to cut." Thus it indicates a moment of time which is indivisible; instant. In explanation of that, he further defines what he means by saying, "in the twinkling of an eye."

The word used to describe this is also used only once in the New Testament. It is *rhipé*. It means "a glance, twinkle or flash of the eye; a rush of wind or flame; any rapid movement." It comes from another word, *rhiptó*, which indicates "to throw, cast, toss, set down; pass." It thus is an event which occurs in one combined action, without any delay and nothing to hinder it.

A person can blink their eye five times in a single second. So fast is this that the brain doesn't always register events which occur so quickly as they flash by. This is the rapidity of the event which is coming. It will be as if a door is opened, we are taken, and then the door is closed before those around us can even perceive what occurred. And the timing of the event is given for us. Nobody can say that "we can't know when the rapture will occur." The fact is that we have been told in advance that it will be "at the last trumpet."

Far too often, this is used by students of prophecy to indicate that this sudden event will occur at the seventh trumpet judgment of Revelation. There is no substantiation for this at all, and it doesn't fit with a host of other verses in the Bible which indicate that we will be gone before, not during or after, the events of the seven-year tribulation period.

Rather, the word "last" here is described well by Albert Barnes. He says it "does not imply that any trumpet shall have been sounded before the resurrection, but is a word denoting that this is the consummation or close of things; it will end the economy of this world; it will be connected with the last state of things."

Understanding this then shows us that even though we know exactly when the rapture will occur - which is at the last trumpet, we will not know when the last trumpet will occur. Instead, all we need to know is that when the trumpet sounds, we are out of here. So keep your ears always ready for that wondrous blast.

When the trump sounds, the blessed hope of the believer in Christ will be realized. "For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." The many words Paul has used so far in this chapter to describe our resurrection bodies will be realized in each believer at that moment. All who have called on Christ, from the dead of thousands of years ago all the way to the final sinner who says, "I'm sorry Lord Jesus, I receive you as my Savior" at that last moment before the trump will be caught away together. We shall be changed, never again to see corruption or death.

Life application: We can send an entire movie through the internet in a moment; something that wasn't even conceived of a short time ago. We can send all of the information of the internet around the world with tinker toys we call computers. If we can do these things, then why should we believe it is impossible that God can do what His word states, just as His word states it? Have faith in God and in His word.