

43. Learning to Reflect the Heavenly Image

In our last topic, we looked at the answer that Paul gave to the Corinthian Christians about the value of the resurrection. In order for our physical and spiritual children to be able to answer various questions that others will ask them about the resurrection, we need to help them understand the various questions that Paul answered about the resurrection. In 1 Corinthians 15:35, we saw that Paul asked two questions that people commonly ask about the resurrection. We also said that Paul gave four illustrations to answer these questions. We saw his first illustration in our last topic as Paul used a seed of grain to illustrate the resurrection. We will see the other three illustrations in our topic today.

In 1 Corinthians 15:39-42, we read, “All flesh *is* not the same flesh, but *there is* one *kind of* flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, *and* another of birds. *There are* also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial *is* one, and the *glory* of the terrestrial *is* another. *There is* one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for *one* star differs from *another* star in glory. So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. *The body* is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption.” In these verses, we see that Paul says that many things have different kinds of bodies. First, he describes various living things. People have one kind of flesh. Animals have a different kind of flesh. Fish have still another kind of flesh and birds have a fourth kind of flesh.

There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies. Those bodies that are in the heavens have a different kind of glory than the bodies that are on the earth. The sun reveals one kind of glory while the moon reflects the glory of the sun. The stars are also different than the sun or the moon. Paul points out the fact that no two stars are the same. God has made every star different from any other star. In fact, they are so different that God has given each star a different name. Psalm 147:4 says, “He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name.” Here, we are reminded that God chose to make each star different because He is very creative in all that He does.

Paul goes on to tell why God makes bodies on earth different from bodies in the heavens. He tells why each star is different from any other star. Paul said that God did this to illustrate what we will be like in the resurrection. We will have a different body in the resurrection than we have right now. In Psalm 90:10, we read, “The days of our lives *are* seventy years; and if by reason of strength *they are* eighty years, yet their boast *is* only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.” Here, we are reminded that our physical bodies are very temporary. That is why we will certainly need a different body in the resurrection because this body grows old. Even the years that we live are filled with labor and sorrow as a result of sin. The time quickly comes that our life is over. That is why we need a body that is very different from the body that we presently have.

For that reason, Paul goes on to answer the question of what our new bodies will be like. As our children learn to understand these verses, they will also learn how to answer some of the questions they will be asked by new Christians. 1 Corinthians 15:42-44 says, “So also *is* the resurrection of

the dead. *The body* is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, 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.” In these verses, we see that our resurrection bodies will be different in four ways from our present bodies.

First, our present body is a body that corrupts when it is buried. This means that it will rot and decay. In contrast, our new body will be raised in incorruption. 1 Corinthians 15:54 says, “So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’” The word that is translated “incorruption” means *a body that is pure and cannot rot and decay*. That is due to the fact that our new body is an eternal body and it will last forever.

Second, our present body is a body that is sown in dishonor. This means that it is a body that is buried because if it is not buried it will rot away in disgrace because it will rot and decay. In contrast, our new body will be raised in glory. Here, we see that our new body will be a body that is raised in glory. In 1 Peter 1:6-7, we read, “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Our faith will be found a faith that has been tested by fire and has stood the test. God says that faith is more precious than gold. As a result, God will give us a new body that reflects this glory.

Third, our present body is sown in weakness. The word that is translated “weakness” is used in Romans 6:19 where we read, “I speak in human *terms* because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members *as* slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness *leading to more* lawlessness, so now present your members *as* slaves of righteousness for holiness.” The weakness of our flesh only leads to sin when we try to do things in our own strength. In contrast, our new body will be raised in power. We have this power now at those times that we are yielding our human spirit to the Holy Spirit. Here, we see that we will have a new body that demonstrates this power throughout eternity.

Fourth, our present body is sown a natural body. The word that is translated “natural” means *belonging to breath*. It speaks of the human body that has the limitations of time and space. In contrast, our new body will be raised a spiritual body. It will not have the limitations of time and space. In Acts 1:9, we read, “Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.” Here, we see that Christ was not limited by the law of gravity. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 says, “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” Here, we see that our bodies will also be changed when Christ takes us to heaven.

In verse 35, Paul asked the question, “And with what body do they come?” That question is now answered in 1 Corinthians 15:45-49 where we read, “And so it is written, ‘The first man Adam

became a living being.’ The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man *was* of the earth, *made* of dust; the second Man *is* the Lord from heaven. 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. And as we have borne the image of the *man* of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly *Man*.” Adam is given as our example of all human life. The first man Adam was made from the dust. He had a natural body. As a result, every person since Adam has had a natural, earthly body.

In contrast, we see that the last Adam (Christ) became a life-giving spirit. In John 10:10, Christ said, “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.” Adam was given human life while Christ came to give spiritual life. As a result, Christ came from heaven to this earth. John 1:14 says, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” Here, we see that the coming of Christ is what made it possible for us to have a spiritual body.

At the moment of salvation, 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” Here, we see that we were made a new creation. This happened because we received spiritual life. However, we did not receive a spiritual body at that time. Before His death, Christ had a fleshly human body. At His resurrection, Christ had a new body without the limitations of time and space. In the same way, the body that we now have is made in the image of the body of Adam. At the moment that we are raised from the dead, we will be given a new body that is in the image that Christ had after His resurrection. That is why we will have a body like Christ throughout eternity.

That is why Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:50, “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.” The natural body that we now have has flesh and blood. This body cannot inherit the kingdom of God because it bears the effects of sin. It is a body that will experience corruption because it will rot and decay. As a result, that is why we must have a new body (a spiritual body) because our present body could never last through eternity.

As we help our physical and spiritual children learn to answer the questions that new Christians may ask about what our bodies will be like in heaven, we also help them to gain a greater understanding and purpose for their own lives. That is why 1 Corinthians 15:58 says, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” Here, we see that the resurrection gives them a reason to serve the Lord because they will know that their labor is not wasted as they serve the Lord on this earth. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to reflect the glory of Christ in their lives today.