

Christ's Resurrection and Ours (1 Corinthians 15)

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To any astute observer of contemporary culture, it is hard not to notice the current interest in and preoccupation with “spirituality.” Whether one attends the latest in movies, watches the current TV talk shows, or peruses the magazine racks or the New Age sections at local bookstores, one cannot miss the fact that “spirituality” is alive and well today. As Christians what are we to think about this present-day trend? D. A. Carson answers this question succinctly and correctly when he writes: “The current interest in ‘spirituality’ is both salutary and frightening.”¹

On the one hand, it is salutary. Christians should rejoice in the fact that people are beginning to realize that rampant materialism, individualism, and philosophical naturalism are not sufficient to explain our humanity and satisfy our deepest longings. There must be more to life than merely the pursuit of personal peace and affluence. As Christians, we know that God has made us in his image and for his own glory and that without the pursuit of knowing him and enjoying him forever, we are truly a lost and empty people.

On the other hand, it is also frightening for the simple reason that not all “spirituality” is necessarily Christian spirituality. As Carson reminds us: “‘spirituality’ has become such an ill-defined, amorphous entity that it covers all kinds of phenomena that an earlier generation of Christians, more given to robust *thought* than is the present generation, would have dismissed as error, or even as ‘paganism’ or ‘heathenism.’”² It is at this point that

Christians need to be particularly vigilant. If we are not careful we may, even with the best of intentions, adopt contemporary views of “spirituality” as Christian, without realizing that these very same views are rooted in an alien worldview structure, and as such, in the end, will lead to a denial of the gospel.³ This temptation is especially strong today. Living in what has been dubbed a postmodern and pluralistic culture, our present danger is to adopt notions of “spirituality” that downplay the exclusive nature of the gospel, which alone leads to true spirituality.⁴

Of course, it must be stressed that this temptation towards syncretism is nothing new. Even in her earliest years, the church faced these same kinds of temptations, particularly the church at Corinth. In fact, when we compare our present-day danger of compromising the gospel due to our adoption of a false spirituality, there is an uncanny resemblance between us and them. As is well known, the Corinthian church prided itself on being a very “spiritual” church. But sadly it had adopted alien views of spirituality from the surrounding culture that eventually led to disaster from within its ranks such as: divisiveness (chs. 1-3), immorality (ch. 5), lawsuits between believers (ch. 6), abuse of the Lord’s Supper and spiritual gifts (chs. 11-14), and so on. If ever there was a perfect example of the maxim—“ideas have consequences”—it was in Corinth. In chapter fifteen we discover another sad example of how false ideas of spirituality lead to disastrous consequences; the situation was

so serious that the apostle Paul warns them that they are in danger of denying the gospel.

What was the false idea that the Corinthians were adopting? Verse 12 gives us the answer: they were denying that there was a future resurrection of the dead. It is not as if they were denying the reality of an afterlife. Rather, they were denying the resurrection of the dead in terms of its bodily features. They were, in other words, confused about both the *reality* and *nature* of the resurrection body of believers. How did they come to such a belief? The answer is found in their adoption of a false view of spirituality, of what it means to be *pneumatikos* (“spiritual”). As Gordon Fee elaborates, “In their view, by the reception of the Spirit, and especially the gift of tongues, they thought that they had already entered the true spirituality that is to be (4:8); already they had begun a form of angelic existence (13:1; cf. 4:9; 7:1-7) in which the body was unnecessary and unwanted, and would finally be destroyed.”⁵ Thus, for them, life in the Spirit seemed to entail that the future bodily resurrection of believers was both undesirable and unnecessary.

It is hard to know for sure, but Fee thinks that at least two historical realities merged to bring about the Corinthians denial of a bodily resurrection.⁶ First, it is possible that the doctrine of the resurrection was not well articulated in the early years, especially among the Gentiles. No doubt, Christ’s resurrection was affirmed as central in securing our salvation from sin and grounding our hope for the future. But would that hope necessarily have been thought of in terms of our resurrection, especially given the fact that so few Christians would have yet died, coupled with a longing for an imminent *parousia*? Second

and probably more significant, in Corinth, after Paul’s departure, it seemed that a false theology began to gain ground that not only denied the value and significance of the body, but also was “over-realized” in its eschatological focus. The Corinthians rightly saw that in the coming of Christ, the blessings of God’s kingdom and the “age to come” realities had now dawned, but they failed to grasp that there was a “not yet” reality tied to the second coming of Christ. In so doing, they so exaggerated their present “spiritual” state that they thought that they had already entered into the final consummated state. Consequently, some of them not only denied the reality of a future bodily resurrection, but also became careless about their present lives in terms of how they lived and what they did with their bodies.⁷

Needless to say, Paul was not pleased with this turn of events. He was deeply concerned about their false ideas of spirituality since their denial of a future bodily resurrection was, if properly understood, a denial of the gospel. For if the gospel is anything it is a gospel that is centered in Jesus Christ, his cross-work, and his resurrection. But as Paul will argue, Christ’s resurrection is not just any old resurrection. It is *the* resurrection, that which the Scriptures anticipated; that which was the “firstfruits” of the final consummated state still to come. Across the sweep of redemptive history, Paul views Jesus’ cross and resurrection as *the* event that restores what was lost under Adam, and thus that which ushers in a new creation, which we as believers, participate in—indeed, *must* participate in. But that full participation in Jesus’ resurrection will not be until the consummation, when King Jesus returns to finalize what he has already begun, by defeating all of our enemies, including sin

and death, raising us from the dead in completion of God's redemptive plan for the universe and returning everything to God the Father so that he may be "all in all."

In one sense, we should be thankful for this sad confusion in Corinth. Not because we rejoice in the Corinthians' errors, but rather because in 1 Corinthians 15, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we have one of the greatest theological treasures for the church. In Paul's response to the Corinthians' denial of the future bodily resurrection of believers, we discover afresh both the centrality and utter significance of Christ's resurrection to God's redemptive purposes and the glorious hope that is ours as those who are found in Christ. Let us unpack this treasure as Paul himself does in three steps: (1) Verses 1-11: A reminder of the central facts of the gospel rooted and grounded in the objective reality of Christ's resurrection; (2) Verses 12-34: An argument establishing the internal logical inconsistency of the viewpoint of the Corinthians, namely that there would be no future bodily resurrection for believers even though Christ was raised bodily; and (3) Verses 35-58: A powerful set of arguments addressing the issue of the certainty, necessity, and nature of the resurrection body of believers.

The Objective Reality of Christ's Resurrection (Verses 1-11)

Paul begins his address of the Corinthians' aberrant theology by reminding them of what both of them hold in common: the objective reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Unlike some so-called Christian scholars today, there is no evidence that the Corinthians denied the reality of Christ's resurrection. For both Paul and them, Christ's resurrection was, in the language of contemporary episte-

mology, "basic." That is why in vv. 1-2, 11 Paul appeals to what they both believe and upon which they have taken their stand. And, as we shall discover, it is from this common, basic conviction that Paul will then argue against their assertion that there is no resurrection of the dead.

Furthermore, there is probably a note of irony as Paul begins. Literally, in v. 1, he says, "I make known to you."⁸ He reminds them of the gospel message that had been preached to them, indeed that which the whole church has believed. By this use of words, he underscores their "ignorance" of the great realities of the gospel. It seems that they do not "know" them as they ought, otherwise, as he will argue, they would not be denying the future resurrection of believers. Something has desperately gone wrong in their thinking. As Fee comments, "To those who think of themselves as 'spiritual' over against Paul, he pronounces the judgment that their 'ignorance' of his word as the commandment of the Lord meant they would be 'ignored' by God himself. Now he 'makes known' to them what they already know, but seem to have forgotten."⁹

With an explanatory "for" (*gar*) in v. 3, Paul proceeds to introduce the gospel message that he had received and which he had passed on, that "of first importance."¹⁰ Most commentators acknowledge that what Paul is probably stating is a very early creedal formulation or "tradition," thus underscoring what was common to the entire church, including the Corinthians.¹¹ What is significant about this early confession is its clear grasp of the significance of the cross work and resurrection of Christ. "Christ died for (*hyper*) our sins." In this simple statement the horrific realities of human depravity, alienation between God and human beings, and death as the just

penalty for sin are assumed, built upon the OT Scriptures. Christ's death is viewed as substitutionary and vicarious, linked to God's plan in redemptive history as evidenced by the expression "according to the Scriptures." This latter phrase is probably not intended to point to any single text, even though such texts as Isaiah 53 come immediately to mind, but rather the larger story line of the OT rooted both in typological structures and specific verbal predictions, which ultimately finds its climax and fulfillment in the saving work of Messiah Jesus.¹²

In v. 4, Paul stresses both the burial and resurrection of Christ. In linking both of these together, it is clear that Paul emphasizes the reality of Christ's death and thus the bodily nature of his resurrection. Christ's resurrection was not to be viewed as some bodiless "spiritual" renewal of life after death. This emphasis is also underscored by the stress placed upon the resurrection appearances (vv. 5-8). For just as Christ was truly dead and buried, so he was truly raised from the dead and seen by a large number of witnesses on a variety of occasions and circumstances including: Cephas (Peter); the twelve;¹³ more than five hundred people at one time, some of whom are still alive;¹⁴ James, most certainly the brother of Jesus;¹⁵ the apostles;¹⁶ and then to Paul.

As Paul introduces himself in v. 8 as a witness of Christ's resurrection, he most certainly is referring to his Damascus road experience where the risen Jesus appeared to him and literally stopped him in his tracks (cf. Acts 8:1; 9:1-2).¹⁷ Due to his having persecuted the church of God (v. 9), Paul views Jesus' appearance to him as an act of grace. His own self-understanding is that he is "last of all," "one abnormally born,"¹⁸ "least of the apostles," even

"unfit to be called an apostle" (vv. 8-9). Yet, God reached down to him and took the initiative from beginning to end—an example for Paul of nothing less than God's sovereign electing grace. And this grace, Paul stresses, did not lead to laziness of life, rather it had the effect of leading him to work harder than the rest of the apostles (v. 10). And, in v. 11, as he comes back full circle to vv. 1-2, he underscores that whether it was he or the rest of the apostles, what they preached was the gospel, rooted and grounded in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. This is the common confession and foundation of the church; this is what the apostles preached; this is what the Corinthians had believed and it was what the Corinthians were to continue to believe and rest in. And now, as Paul transitions to the next stage of his argument in vv. 12-34, it is on this common confession and faith that he will confront the Corinthians with their inconsistent acceptance of Christ's resurrection and their denial of a future bodily resurrection of believers.

Before we turn to the second part of Paul's argument, it is important, especially in our day, to make one crucial observation. Even though Paul's point in vv. 1-11 is not to prove the resurrection of Jesus in any formal sense—instead it is to remind the Corinthians of what they hold in common with Paul and the whole church—it is certainly imperative to be reminded of the fact that for Paul the resurrection of Jesus Christ is an objective space-time reality. For Paul (and the whole NT), it would have been utterly inconceivable to argue as some have done in our own day that the resurrection belonged to the category of myth, or that the explanation of it was found in some individual and/or collective hallucinations, or that Jesus'

disciples went to the wrong tomb, or even worse, an intentional deceit by these early witnesses including himself.¹⁹ Rather, for Paul and the whole church, what was believed and proclaimed, what had been received and passed on was that Jesus Christ had died, been buried, and now, by God's mighty action in human history was alive ruling and reigning as Lord in fulfillment of God's salvific plans. This fact is part of the non-negotiables of the Christian faith. To deny Christ's resurrection and then attempt to retain the name "Christian" is simply a contradiction in terms. Whether we live in the first century or the twenty-first, we too need to take our stand on these same gospel realities. And especially living in a pluralistic world that promotes many gods and saviors, that attempts to convince us that all religions at heart are basically the same, we must, with Paul and the whole church, proclaim only one Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Logical Inconsistency of Denying the Resurrection of Believers (Verses 12-34)

After having reminded the Corinthians of their common grounding in the resurrection of Christ, Paul now turns to a *reductio ad absurdum* kind of argument.²⁰ The purpose of his argument is to demonstrate to the Corinthians that their view is logically inconsistent and thus should be rejected. In both believing in Christ's resurrection (vv. 1-11) yet denying their own future resurrection (v. 12), Paul establishes that there is an internal contradiction between these two beliefs. Both beliefs cannot be held simultaneously, if one is to remain consistent in one's overall theology. And even worse, in the case of the Corinthians, if they consistently deny the future resurrection of believers, this will inevita-

bly lead to a denial of the resurrection of Christ, and thus the gospel. Indeed, the stakes could not be higher! Interestingly, Paul, unlike those in our own postmodern era, is an exegete and theologian who has no problem in demanding of the Corinthians logical consistency and coherence between their beliefs, as well as affirming, as already stated, certain beliefs as non-negotiable. It is a lesson that we would do well to follow.

Paul proceeds in three steps: (1) He begins by hypothetically granting their viewpoint for sake of argument and then drawing the logical entailment of that view, namely that Christ is not raised (vv. 12-19); (2) He then reverses the argument by appealing to what the Corinthians and he have in common, namely the conviction that Christ is indeed raised. But if this is the case, Paul argues, then this belief logically entails that there will be a future resurrection of believers, something the Corinthians deny (vv. 20-28); (3): Paul finishes his argument by once again hypothetically assuming the Corinthian viewpoint and then drawing the conclusion that if they are correct then both his and their present practices are inconsistent with their viewpoint (vv. 29-34). Let us look at each of these steps in turn.

If Christ Is Not Raised... (Verses 12-19)

Paul first begins by hypothetically assuming the Corinthian viewpoint for sake of argument. In v. 13, he then draws the entailment of such a view: Christ has not been raised. But, of course, given the common confession of the church that Christ has indeed been raised (vv. 1-11), the Corinthian position is contradictory and thus impossible. What Paul assumes, even though he does not fully argue for it until

vv. 20-28, is an intimate, indissoluble, covenantal relation between the believer and Christ. Thus if Christ is raised, then the believer must too be raised; if the believer is not raised, then Christ is not raised.²¹

Paul then begins to flesh out at least four disastrous implications of denying Christ's resurrection (vv. 14-19). First, if Christ has not been raised then both the people's faith and the apostolic preaching are "in vain," that is, without basis.²² Second, if Christ is not raised, then the apostles who have proclaimed the resurrection are false witnesses, distorters of the truth (v. 15). Third, if Christ is not raised then there is a sense in which God is implicated as well (vv. 15-16). As Fee states, "Since for Paul Christ's resurrection is not his (Christ's) own doing, but God's vindication of the work of the Son, that means that a denial of the resurrection of the dead leads ultimately to a denial of the gospel altogether and levels an accusation against God himself that he did what in fact he did not do—if they are correct."²³ Fourth, if Christ is not raised then Christian faith is futile in a further sense: "you are still in your sins" (v. 17) and dead believers are forever lost (v. 18). For if Christ has not been raised then what guarantee is there that his death "for our sins according to the Scriptures" (v. 3) accomplished anything? A dead Savior is no Savior at all. And, if Christ is not raised, all those who have trusted him for the forgiveness of their sins and who have now died are forever lost (v. 18).

These are disastrous implications indeed! Paul concludes in v. 19 by stating that "if only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men." As Thiselton correctly points out, Paul is saying more than that we are to be pitied because there is simply no postmortem

existence awaiting us. Rather we are to be pitied, Paul argues, because the whole chain of consequences in vv. 13-18 would be entailed: "(i) the gospel has no substance; (ii) faith is ineffective; (iii) the witnesses are liars; (iv) sin retains its destructive and damaging control; and (v) believers who have died are irretrievably lost."²⁴

But Christ Is Raised! (Verses 20-28)

Now Paul reverses his argument by appealing to what the Corinthians and he have in common, namely the resurrection of Christ. Since Christ has been raised (vv. 1-11) and Christ's resurrection is *the* resurrection, that is, the "firstfruits" of the full harvest awaiting the consummation, then the inevitable implication is not only the defeat of death itself, but also the future resurrection of believers. Of course, what grounds Paul's argument in these verses is a whole biblical theology following the story line of Scripture, rooted in the God of creation, providence, and redemption. In fact, at least three truths are assumed by Paul that are utterly crucial to his argument, which are all unpacked in vv. 20-28. Let us look at each of these in turn.

First, Paul views the coming, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ in thoroughly redemptive-historical and eschatological categories.²⁵ As God's Son (cf. Rom 1:1-4), the Last Adam (vv. 21-22), Christ has inaugurated a new creation, supremely evidenced in his death, resurrection, and gift of the Spirit. As such, he has ushered in the "age to come"—that which the OT prophets longed for and anticipated; an age characterized by the defeat of God's enemies, sin, death, and Satan himself. Even though this age has "not yet" been consummated in its fullness—for that awaits his second coming

(*parousia*)—it nevertheless is “already” here in both its reality and power. In fact, the resurrection and the gift of the Spirit are proof positive of this fact. That is why Paul conceives of the resurrection of Christ (and the gift of the Spirit) in the category of “firstfruits” (vv. 20, 23; cf. Rom 8:23). Just as the first fruits of the harvest are a foretaste of the full harvest (cf. Lev 23:9-14), so the resurrection of Christ anticipates and ensures the resurrection for all those who belong to him. In this sense it functions similar to a “down payment” (*arrabōn*)—a pledge on the part of God for the final eschatological harvest or payment.²⁶ Even though the resurrection of believers is not until the *parousia*, Christ’s resurrection serves as the ground and guarantee that all those who are “in Christ” shall be raised, patterned after his glorious resurrection.

Second, as already stated and related to the first point, Paul assumes an indissoluble union between the resurrection of Christ and the bodily resurrection of believers. This makes sense in light of the Adam-Christ typological contrast in vv. 21-22 (cf. Rom 5:12-21). Just as Adam was the covenantal head of the old creation, and by his disobedience brought death to us all, so Christ is the covenantal head of the new creation, who brings life and salvation for all those who believe in him, by his obedient work on their behalf.²⁷ The use of this typological contrast is to underscore the indissoluble union between these two heads and their people and thus the inevitability of the believer “in Christ” sharing in the resurrection of the dead. As Fee correctly observes, “Thus Christ is the firstfruits; he is God’s pledge that all who are his will be raised from the dead. The inevitable process of death begun in Adam will be reversed by the equally inevitable process of “bringing to life” begun in

Christ. Therefore, it is not possible for the Corinthians to say there is no resurrection of the dead. Such a resurrection is necessitated by Christ’s.”²⁸

Third, Paul views the resurrection of Christ in light of God’s sovereign purposes. In this interim period between the first and second coming of the Lord Jesus, not all of God’s enemies have been subjected to him and destroyed, in particular the enemy death. In this sense, the day when God is “all in all” has not yet arrived. That is why Paul elsewhere can speak of believers, indeed the whole creation, groaning as it awaits the consummation and the resurrection of our bodies (cf. Rom 8:18-27). But precisely because God²⁹ raised Jesus triumphantly from the dead, Paul is confident that God has set in motion an “inevitable chain of events”³⁰ that will only be completed when all of God’s enemies are destroyed, including death itself. That is why Christ’s resurrection *demand*s our resurrection since if we are not raised bodily from the grave, then death is never truly defeated and God can never be “all in all.” Ultimately, unless death is destroyed and we are raised, God as sovereign Lord of creation, history, and redemption is placed in question. That is the point Paul stresses in vv. 23-26 by emphasizing the “order” of events that leads to the consummation—Christ’s resurrection is the first fruits (v. 23); then (*epeita*) at his coming, believers will be raised (v. 23); then (*eita*) there will be the end or goal (*telos*) of human history when the Lord Jesus hands over the kingdom to God the Father after having destroyed every foe and enemy, including the last enemy, death (vv. 24-26).³¹

Paul alludes to two OT texts to buttress his point—Psalm 8:6; 110:1—texts rich in Messianic significance and used elsewhere in the NT (e.g., Matt 22:41-46) but especially

in Hebrews (e.g., Heb 1:13; 2:5-9; 5:6; 7:17-20). Psalm 8:5-6 is a commentary on Genesis 1:26-30 emphasizing the exalted status of human beings as God's image bearers and vice-regents over the earth. However, due to Adam's disobedience and thus the entrance of death into the world, human beings have failed to achieve what God purposed and intended for them. But as Paul emphasizes here (cf. Heb 2:5-9), through the obedience of Jesus, the Last Adam, the God-*man*, the original intention for human beings and the sovereign rule described in Psalm 110 have been restored. Paul's use of these texts buttresses his conviction that what follows from Christ's resurrection is the inevitable destruction of death and thus the resurrection of the dead.³² Fee admirably summarizes this point when he writes:

The resurrection of Christ has determined our existence for all time and eternity. We do not merely live out our length of days and then have the hope of resurrection as an addendum; rather, as Paul makes plain in this passage, Christ's resurrection has set in motion a chain of inexorable events that absolutely determines our present and our future. Christ is the firstfruits of those who are his, who will be raised at his coming. That ought both to reform the way we currently live and to reshape our worship into seasons of unbridled rejoicing.³³

If Christ Is Not Raised... Further Implications (Verses 29-34)

Paul finishes his powerful argument by once again hypothetically assuming the Corinthian viewpoint and then drawing the logical conclusion that if they are correct then both his and their present practices are inconsistent with their viewpoint. Here, then, is a kind of practical inconsistency: a particular viewpoint is affirmed in

theory but denied in practice.³⁴

One of the most famous and puzzling practices that Paul mentions in this regard is found in v. 29—a kind of proxy baptism for the dead. The debate over what exactly is going on here has spawned numerous theories and much speculation. As Fee observes, “the normal reading of the text is that some Corinthians are being baptized, apparently vicariously, in behalf of some people who have already died.”³⁵ But what exactly does this mean or entail? Nowhere do we find any precedent in the NT for this kind of baptism nor in the early years of the church, except maybe among some heretical groups.³⁶ In addition, taken at face value Paul does not seem to criticize this view. What shall we say about this issue?

At least three points need to be stated. First, a disputed text such as this must not be used to erect a whole theology and practice, especially given the fact that we simply do not know enough about what Paul is referring to in Corinth. In other words, there is no justification for making this practice, whatever it is, normative for the church.³⁷ Second, if I were to venture a guess as to what the meaning of this practice is, probably Anthony Thiselton's view that “baptism for the sake of the dead refers to the decision of a person or persons to ask for, and to receive, baptism as a result of the desire to be united with their believing relatives who have died” is best.³⁸ But, in the end, I simply do not know. Third, no matter what speculation surrounds the meaning of this “proxy baptism,” Paul's argument is clear: the behavior of the Corinthians in this matter is inconsistent with their denial of a future bodily resurrection of believers. Paul does not necessarily endorse or condone their behavior. Instead, he is attempting to

demonstrate that the Corinthians are living contradictions in the sense that their professed beliefs and behavior contradict each other, a kind of practical absurdity.

In vv. 30-33, Paul turns to his own experience and behavior. Why does he risk literally life and limb, if there is no resurrection of the dead? Why would he face peril and trials “every hour,” that is, continually? What would he gain in facing opposition, even to the point of fighting wild beasts in Ephesus (probably to be taken metaphorically for a variety of reasons)³⁹ if there is no resurrection of the dead? Of course, the answer is “nothing.” His labors as an apostle would be a living contradiction if the Corinthians were correct. In moving to his own experience, Paul, as he does elsewhere (cf. 2 Cor 11:23-29), not only contrasts their view of apostleship with his own, but he also indicates how Christ’s resurrection played a central role in his life. He is willing to give up everything for Christ, even to the point of death. But Paul also acknowledges that if there is no resurrection, then he has played the fool with his life; all of his labor has been in vain and it would be better to live as the Epicureans suggested: “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow, we die” (v. 32; cf. Isa 22:13). But Paul immediately rejects such logic because Christ is raised. His labors as an apostle are not a living contradiction because what he has believed, preached, and lived out, is true. And as such, he commands the Corinthians not to be deceived, to come to their right mind, and to stop sinning (vv. 33-34).

In a final note of irony, he underscores their utter⁴⁰ ignorance of God in their failing to grasp the significance of Christ’s resurrection and its implications for them, both now in terms of their lives, and in the future (v. 34). In doing so, Paul puts his

finger on the problem. What they have failed to realize is the sovereign power of God, who through Christ’s resurrection has set in motion that chain of events which will ensure the fulfillment of all of God’s redemptive purposes, including our resurrection.

The Certainty and Nature of the Resurrection Body of Believers (Verses 35-58)

In this last section, Paul takes up a new issue. In spite of his appeal in v. 34 to the knowledge of God, and hence the sovereign power of God, he anticipates a skeptical objection introduced by a strong contrastive “But (*alla*) someone will ask, How (*pōs*)⁴¹ are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?” (v. 35). Up to this point Paul has argued for the necessity of the future resurrection of believers if there is to be any Christian faith at all. Now he turns to the subject of the nature of the resurrection body and addresses their skeptical outlook. Specifically, he wants to make it clear that the resurrection is not only future, but that it is a *physical* resurrection in a *transformed body*, patterned after the resurrection body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Due to the intimate relationship between Christ and his people, since Christ was raised bodily, there must of necessity be a bodily resurrection for believers. But the resurrection body is not merely the re-animation or resuscitation of a dead body, rather it is a body adapted to the new conditions of the future. In this sense, there is both continuity and discontinuity between the present body and the resurrection body. The present body is earthly, natural (*psychikon*), subject to decay. The raised body is heavenly, spiritual (*pneumatikon*), and incorruptible. The final result

is a glorious resurrection transformation of both the dead and the living wherein the final enemy, death, is swallowed up in victory. There are three interlocking and ascending steps that Paul takes to argue his case: (1) An appeal to the natural order that God has made, in order to argue for the reasonableness of the resurrection body (vv. 36-44); (2) An appeal to the nature of Christ's resurrection body to argue for the certainty of the resurrection body (vv. 45-49); and (3) An appeal for the absolute necessity of the resurrection in order for believers to enter our heavenly existence and for God's plan of redemption to be complete (vv. 50-57). Let us look at each step in Paul's argument.

The Reasonableness of the Resurrection Body (Verses 36-44)

In order to respond to the question of v. 35, Paul appeals to what God has made in the natural order, to seeds and kinds of bodies (*sōma*)—an appeal not only from the known to the unknown, but also an analogy—something the Corinthians did not seem even to consider. His strong rebuke in v. 36—“Foolish man”—challenges the Corinthians not to forget God in their thinking of these matters as the Creator and sovereign Lord.⁴² In appealing to the analogous relationship between the seed and the resurrection body, Paul establishes the utter reasonableness of the resurrection body from the way God has ordered the natural world. He develops the analogy in three steps.

First, if one observes the way God has designed a seed, one has to notice that it is only when the seed is sown and dies that “life” comes (v. 36). Thus, for example, if one wants an apple tree to grow, one must first plant the seed and then the seed must die so that the tree will grow. In one sense,

death is the precondition for life. One must hasten to add that this does not mean that Paul thinks that all must die in the sense that death is an inevitable fact of the universe. Paul knows, as Scripture teaches, that death is an abnormality in God's universe due to Adam's disobedience. Rather, what he is developing is an analogy: if one observes how God has so ordered nature, in this case the seed, it “demonstrates that *out of death* a new expression of life springs forth.”⁴³ Even in death God's purposes are not thwarted. As with the seed, what is sown in death is brought forth into life. By analogy, why should the Corinthians find it incredible that in the case of their death, the resurrection body comes as a new expression of life? In God's universe, even in the natural realm, death does not have the final word. Thus Paul concludes: “So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable” (v. 42).

Second, not only does the seed in the natural realm demonstrate that life arises out of death, it also displays that the life that comes forth does so in a *transformed* body (vv. 37-38). In other words, the end product of the seed planted in the ground does *not* look like the original seed, even though there is some kind of continuity between it and the end product; Paul does not doubt that fact. However, his stress here is on the massive discontinuity and transformation that takes place. So by analogy, if God has so arranged and ordered the natural realm in this way, then why is it hard to imagine that God, the sovereign creator and Lord, is able to transform our present body, which will die and be buried, into that of a transformed, resurrection body? It is entirely reasonable. So Paul concludes: “It is sown in dishonor, it

is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power” (v. 43).

Third, in reflecting on seeds and bodies in the natural realm he also observes the fact that God gives to each seed its own kind of body adapted to its own kind of existence (vv. 38-41). There is, for example, a specific kind of body designed for human existence as well as animal existence. Even in the realm of animal existence there are different kinds of bodies designed for different kinds of animals appropriate for their own kind of existence, such as birds and fish. There are also different kinds of bodies depending upon whether a created thing is designed for celestial existence or earthly existence, thus his appeal in v. 41 to the sun, moon, and stars.⁴⁴ And each body, Paul adds, has its purpose, design, and glory. By analogy, if this is how God has ordered and arranged the natural realm, then why is it hard to imagine God doing this in the case of the resurrection body? Just as God creates every seed or thing with its own kind of body adapted to its own kind of existence, so God makes our resurrection bodies adapted to a future resurrection existence. So Paul concludes: “It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body” (v. 44).

The mention of “spiritual body” (*sōma pneumatikon*) must not be misunderstood, especially when contrasted with the expression “natural body” (*sōma psychikon*). It is clear from the context that Paul is not thinking of “spiritual” as referring to an immaterial view of the resurrection body. Rather he is attempting to argue that our future existence is an existence that will require a body adapted for that final, consummated state dominated by the Spirit of God. That final state will be a physical state, yet it will be a transformed existence, fitted for our glorified state living in the

new creation.⁴⁵ Craig Blomberg rightly suggests that in this context, the contrast might better be indicated by translating the adjectives as “natural” and “supernatural.”⁴⁶

But, of course, as with any analogy there are inherent weaknesses. No doubt, God has so structured and ordered the natural order that these truths are evident in them, but Paul wants to move his argument from merely a *reasonable* basis to a more certain one. So that leads him to argue for the *certainty* of the resurrection body from the nature of Christ’s resurrection.

The Certainty of the Resurrection Body (Verses 45-49)

Already in vv. 21-22, Paul has made mention of the typological relation between Adam and Christ. Here, as elsewhere in Scripture (cf. Rom 5:12-21), Adam is presented as a covenantal head of the human race. Due to his disobedience, Adam brought sin and death into the human race; all human beings have died in him (cf. Rom 3:23).⁴⁷ But, by God’s plan, initiative, and grace, God has sent another man, the Last Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ, the covenantal head of the new creation. And by his obedience, he has won our salvation. In him—in his cross work and resurrection—he has begun to reverse the disastrous effects of Adam’s sin, which will eventually culminate in the destruction of death itself. And because he acts as our covenantal head, both in his representative and substitutionary work, all those who are found “in him” will be raised just as he was raised. For, as Paul has already outlined, Christ’s resurrection is the first fruits, the anticipation of the end, the assurance and guarantee of the believers’ future resurrection.

Now in this section, Paul once again

picks up the Adam-Christ link, not so much to demonstrate that our resurrection is guaranteed, but to show the *kind* of body that we will have as believers, patterned after Christ's resurrection body. Paul quotes from Genesis 2:7 (v. 45). Paul's main point is that Adam was given a certain kind of body at creation—a natural (*psychē*) body; a body of the earth; a body, which as a result of sin, is subject to death and decay. Since Adam is the covenantal head of the old creation—our representative—then we bear his likeness in our fallen state. But Christ is different. He is a life-giving spirit (*pneuma zōopoioun*). His life is the life of heaven itself, for he is the God-man. And as the covenantal head of his people, his resurrection body becomes the pattern of our resurrection body—a “spiritual” (*pneumatikon*) body—that is, supernatural and glorified. That is why, Paul argues, Christ's resurrection renders it *certain* that it will be so.

Paul nevertheless reminds the Corinthians that the reality of our resurrection, patterned after Christ's resurrection, is still future. Just as we have worn the image of Adam, so we shall wear⁴⁸ the “image of the man of heaven” (see v. 49). Even though the new order that Christ has inaugurated has already broken in and we already are new creations in Christ (2 Cor 5:17), we still must await the future when our lowly bodies will be transformed, fitted for the condition of the consummated state. This is what the Corinthians have failed to understand and grasp. They had adopted false views of spirituality that have led them to believe that they had assumed the “heavenly” existence now, hence their denial of the future resurrection of the dead. But Paul says no; that final reality still awaits the second coming of the Lord of Glory. The fact that it will happen is

certain, but it is still future. But there is still one last point Paul wants to stress before his final word of exhortation.

The Absolute Necessity of the Resurrection Body (Verses 50-57)

Paul, having argued for the *reasonableness* and then *certainty* of the believers' resurrection body now completes his argument by insisting, in the strongest of terms, for the absolute *necessity* of it—our perishable and mortal body must (*dei*) be clothed with that which is imperishable and immortal (v. 53). Believers, whether dead or alive, *must* be transformed in order to enter the kingdom of God in its fullness (see vv. 50, 53-54). As Anthony Hoekema comments: “It is impossible for us in our present state of being, in our present bodies, weak and perishable as they are, to inherit the full blessings of the life to come. They must be changed.”⁴⁹ This, once again, was something the Corinthians forgot. Sadly, they had been influenced by false and alien beliefs, possibly the belief that the physical order was not really that significant after all. As a result, there was no great need for a physical resurrection body. Their present body, as part of this fallen order, did not have to be redeemed and transformed.

Paul does not agree, for he realized something the Corinthians had forgotten: the God of redemption is also the God of creation. And in creation, as Genesis 1 stresses repeatedly, God made everything good, including physical, material reality. But due to the disobedience of the first man, sin and death have now entered this world. And, what is crucial to stress—since sin and death affect both physical and spiritual reality, so redemption, if it is to be complete and God is to be “all in all,” must also affect both the physical and spiritual

realm. Sin and death must be destroyed. And for death to be destroyed completely there must, of necessity, be the resurrection of the dead.

The problem in Corinth, unfortunately, is too often with us today. In adopting false notions of “spirituality,” they had also trivialized the reality of both sin and death. They did not view death as Scripture views it—as an abnormality, an intrusion into God’s good universe, a robber, an enemy to be defeated, the just penalty due to our sin and rebellion against God. Thus they failed to understand why, if God is truly to redeem his people and this world; if God’s plan of salvation is truly to be complete, then not only must Christ be raised as a demonstration that sin has been dealt with in his cross and death has been defeated, but we too, must be raised with him. For without Christ’s resurrection; without our resurrection in him, there is no biblical salvation in the complete sense of the word. God’s good creation would not then be restored and God’s plan of salvation would not encompass all that sin had affected, namely both spiritual and physical realities. That is why all those who die in Christ and those of us who are alive when Christ returns will, and must, be raised and transformed. God’s plan of salvation is only complete when these events have happened.

In v. 51 Paul describes this glorious event in terms of a “mystery” (*mystērion*). For Paul “mystery” is tied to the concept of revelation and redemptive history in the sense that what was once hidden is now made known due to God’s unfolding plan in redemptive history brought to fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Thus, now that Christ has come, and has risen from the dead, we now know what was once hidden.⁵⁰ As Paul proclaims: “Lo! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be

changed” (v. 51). What is now made known is that both those who have died in Christ, and those in Christ who are still living when he returns, will be transformed.

How will all of this take place? When will it take place? At the end. In an instant. When the trumpet sounds.⁵¹ Those who are alive when Christ returns will be transformed (v. 51). Those who are dead will come out of their graves—transformed (v. 52). And it *must* be so. Our bodies, whether dead or alive, in their present “natural” form must be transformed into the image of our Lord Jesus Christ and his glorious resurrection body. For it is only then that what Christ inaugurated in his first coming will be consummated in his second. As Fee states so well: “The long chain of decay and death inaugurated by the first Adam will finally be irrevocably broken by the last Adam”⁵² Death itself, the last enemy, finally and definitively will be destroyed.

How should we think of our resurrection bodies? Not much is stated to answer this question but there are a number of hints, especially in v. 53: we shall be raised imperishable (*phtharton*) and immortal (*athanasian*).⁵³ Like Christ’s resurrection body, our resurrection bodies will be fitted for the new creation. They will not be susceptible to disease; they will not be susceptible to death. As we saw earlier in vv. 43-44, they will be physical bodies that are raised in “glory,” “power,” and “dominated and directed by Holy Spirit” (*pneumatikos*).⁵⁴ Will there be continuity between our present body and the resurrection body? The very fact that we are raised assumes some kind of continuity between them. In fact, as Hoekema argues, “the very language of v. 53 implies and demands continuity: ‘For this perishable nature must *put on* the imperishable, and this mortal

nature must *put on* immortality.”⁵⁵ Yet, there is certainly discontinuity as well. Probably the best place to notice this is with our Lord himself. As we compare and contrast his pre-resurrection body to that of his post-resurrection body, there are some obvious differences which will also be true of us. But other than thinking through the presentation of the post-resurrection body of our Lord, we know very little about the exact nature of the resurrection body, except that it will be fitted to live in a new heavens and new earth—a reality that is glorious beyond our wildest imagination.

Given these incredible realities, is it any wonder that Paul taunts death by citing Isaiah 25:8 and Hosea 13:14 before he turns to exuberant praise? (vv. 54-57). In so doing, this brings Paul’s argument to a powerful end. He knows that if Christ does not return before he dies that he will be laid in the grave. But in spite of that, he looks in the face of the reality of death and makes mockery of it. Why? Because of God’s redemptive purposes in Christ Jesus our Lord. Jesus who died for our sins is now alive. In his death and resurrection, death has been destroyed because sin has been paid for and the demands of the law have been met (v. 56). Jesus has nailed our sin to his cross thus securing our justification, reconciliation, and redemption. In breaking the power of sin, paying it penalty, and satisfying the demands of the law, he has destroyed the power of death and removed its sting. Is it any wonder that Paul taunts death? Ours is the victory in Christ Jesus. In his resurrection *the* End has dawned. And even though we may die before he returns, we shall—indeed we must—be raised for we are in Christ, safe and secure. Even though we still bear the marks of this present, fallen age, Christ’s coming, Christ’s death, Christ’s resurrection is our

surety and guarantee.

“Therefore,” Paul concludes, “stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain” (v. 58). What a fitting way to end this theological treasure. To a church that was wracked with aberrant theology, divisions, and discord, Paul brings them back, as he has done time and time again, to the sureties of the gospel. This is where they were to take their stand. And, we must add, this is where we must take our stand as well. If they were to remain faithful to the Lord in the midst of a pluralistic and pagan culture, they had to remove from their thinking the syncretistic ideas that they had adopted and return once again to the truth of God’s Word. The same is true for us as well. Living in a pluralistic and postmodern culture has incredible dangers if we do not keep our theological bearings, but it also poses wonderful opportunities. May we heed seriously Paul’s exhortation to stand firm, to give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord, for in our risen and glorified Redeemer our labor is never in vain, rather it is that which will last for all eternity.

ENDNOTES

¹D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 555.

²Ibid.

³For a warning in this area with practical examples see Peter Jones, *Pagans in the Pews* (Ventura: Regal, 2001).

⁴See the following works for helpful introductions to the subject of postmodernism, pluralism, and the impact of these cultural and intellectual movements on the gospel: D. A. Carson, ed. *Telling the Truth* (Grand Rapids: Zon-

dervan, 2000) and *The Gagging of God*; Gene E. Veith, Jr. *Postmodern Times* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1994); David Dockery, ed. *The Challenge of Postmodernism*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001); Millard J. Erickson, *Truth or Consequences* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001); Harold Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001).

⁵Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 715.

⁶*Ibid.*, 715-717.

⁷See 1 Cor 5:1-12; 6:12-20; 7:1-8:13; and so on. For more on the “over-realized” eschatology of the Corinthians see Anthony C. Thiselton, “Realized Eschatology at Corinth,” *New Testament Studies* 24 (1977-78) 510-526 and *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New International Greek Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) 40-41; 1169-1178; Craig Blomberg, *1 Corinthians* (NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) 25; cf. Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979) 13-22.

⁸Gk: *Gnōrizō hymin*. Most English versions translate it something like: “I want to remind you (NIV).”

⁹Fee, 719; cf. Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 1183.

¹⁰“Of first importance” is a much better rendering than that of “at the first.” Paul’s emphasis is on the logical rather than temporal force. For a discussion of this point see Fee, 722 and Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 1186.

¹¹For a discussion of this point see Fee, 718 and Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 1188-1189. The confession is stated in four statements each introduced with a *hoti*, basi-

cally the equivalent of quotation marks: (1) That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; (2) and that he was buried; (3) and that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures; (4) and that he was seen by Cephas and the Twelve.

¹²See Blomberg, 301; Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 1190-1191; cf. Jesus’ own self-understanding of his cross and resurrection in relation to the OT in Luke 24:25-27, 44-46.

¹³There has been a lot of discussion regarding the makeup of “the twelve.” It is best to view this designation as referring to the original twelve disciples chosen by Jesus as seen in the Gospels, even when Judas Iscariot and Thomas were missing. See Fee, 729.

¹⁴Most certainly Paul’s reference to the five hundred and, in fact, many of them still being alive underscores the objective reality of Christ’s resurrection and serves as an open invitation for the Corinthians to inquire about it for themselves.

¹⁵See Fee, 731; Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 1207-1208.

¹⁶Since “the apostles” are distinguished from “the twelve” it is best to think that this group refers to a larger group than merely the twelve who in Paul’s understanding had seen the risen Christ and were commissioned by him to proclaim the gospel and found churches. In this case, it would have included the original twelve, minus Judas Iscariot of course, plus at least James and Paul, and possibly others. On this discussion see Fee, 731-732; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) 905-911.

¹⁷On the significance of the Damascus road experience for Paul’s understanding of Jesus and the formation of his

theology, see Seyoon Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981).

¹⁸Gk: *ektrōma*. Literally this word refers to a kind of premature birth in terms of miscarriage or stillbirth. On the meaning and use of this term and how it functions in Paul's argument, see Fee, 732-734.

¹⁹On the contemporary discussion surrounding the defense of the historicity of the resurrection of Christ against various criticisms see William L. Craig, *Assessing the New Testament Evidence for the Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus* (Lewiston: Mellen, 1989); J. P. Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987) 159-183.

²⁰A *reductio ad absurdum* argument attempts to reduce your opponent's particular premise or overall position to absurdity. This argument aims to show that your opponent's premise entails a conclusion that is known to be false, and since that is the case, the premise in question then itself must be false. The argument follows a rule in formal logic known as *modus tollens*, which may be stated as follows: Premise #1: "If P, then Q"; Premise #2: "Not-Q"; Conclusion: "Not-P." For more on this form of argument see John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1987) 273-275.

²¹On this point see Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., *Resurrection and Redemption: A Study in Paul's Soteriology* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1987) 33-74; Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975)

44-90; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001) 456-459.

²²For a discussion of "empty" and "vain" (*kenos*) see Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 1218; Fee, 741-742.

²³Fee, 743.

²⁴Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 1222. Fee, 744, states it this way: "Thus the whole Corinthian existence, past, present, and future, has come to nothing, if they are correct."

²⁵See Fee, 746.

²⁶For a more complete discussion of "firstfruits" see Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 1223-1224 and Fee, 749. For a further development of the eschatological structure that Paul develops and which grounds his argument see Hoekema, *Bible and Future*, 1-75 and George Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) 407-411.

²⁷When Paul says that "in Christ *all* will be made alive," it is clear from the context as well as Paul's overall theology that he means "all who are in Christ will be made alive." There is no hint of universalism at this point. In terms of the fate of unbelievers, Paul is not addressing that issue in this text. However, elsewhere in the NT, it is clear that there will be a bodily resurrection for unbelievers as well, not for glorification but for eternal judgment (cf. Matt 25:46; John 5:29; 2 Thess 1:9; Rev 20:11-15). For a defense of this view see Robert A. Peterson, "The Case for Traditionalism" in *Two Views of Hell*, Edward W. Fudge and Robert A. Peterson (Downers

Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000) 115-181.

²⁸Fee, 751.

²⁹The emphasis throughout is on the action of God in raising Christ Jesus from the dead and putting all things under his feet. There is some discussion in v. 27a of whether "he" refers to God or Christ. Given what Paul has outlined in this chapter, it is best to take it as referring to God the Father. For a discussion of this point see Fee, 757-759.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 747.

³¹These verses have spawned a lot of discussion as to whether Paul is intending to say that between the two "thens" (*epeita...eita*) there will be another event, such as a millennium. Blomberg, 304, acknowledges that the adverbs, "then... then" in vv. 23-24 do not necessarily support a doctrine of the millennium, "but it at least allows for it." But it is also possible that the "thens" should be taken in a more logical sense (cf. Fee, 753-754; Hoekema, *Bible and Future*, 182-185). In order to decide which option is best, one would have to consider other Scripture, particularly Revelation 20, since vv. 23-24 are not sufficient in themselves to decide the debate. Even with that said, it is important to stress that Paul's main point here is to demonstrate that on the basis of Christ's resurrection God has set in motion everything necessary to bring about the consummation, including the defeat of death itself, thus ensuring the believer's resurrection from the dead.

³²See Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 1230-1240.

³³Fee, 760.

³⁴Both Fee and Blomberg list this last set of arguments as *ad hominem*. For more on this see Fee, 760-762; Blomberg, 299.

³⁵Fee, 763-764.

³⁶For a full discussion of the history of interpretation on this contentious issue and the various possible options that have been propounded see Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 1240-1249; cf. Fee, 763-769.

³⁷On this point, one thinks of the Mormon view which attempts to build a whole practice on the basis of v. 29. This is simply illegitimate. See Blomberg, 305.

³⁸Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 1248.

³⁹There are a number of reasons why this reference to fighting wild beasts should be taken metaphorically, including the observation that Roman citizens were exempt from being thrown to animals in the gladiator's ring. Furthermore, this kind of language was commonly used metaphorically for human opposition. See Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 1251-1252; Cf. Blomberg, 299.

⁴⁰Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 1256, suggests that we add the word "utter" to what Paul is saying, even though it is not in the Greek since *agnōsian echein* means more than *agnoein*. It is often synonymous with a darkened pre-Christian state that often characterizes the Gentile mind that does not know the God of Scripture.

⁴¹Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 1261, rightly stresses that the emphasis is on the "how" (*pōs*) in the sense of "how is it possible?" rather than in the sense of "in what manner?"

⁴²Fee, 780.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 781; cf. Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 1264.

⁴⁴There has been a lot of debate over Paul's use of the expression "celestial bodies" (*sōmata epourania*). On the one hand, some ascribe to Paul a primitive cosmology. See Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 1268-1269, for a discussion and rejection of this point of view. On the other hand, Mormon theology has appealed to vv. 38-41 for support of their view that there are different kinds of heavenly bodies that believers will receive. This is hardly Paul's point. In contrasting different kinds of celestial bodies, Paul's purpose is only to cite further examples, from the natural realm, of how God has created different kinds of bodies for different purposes, before he draws an analogy to the resurrection body. For more on this point see Blomberg, 318 and Hoekema, *Bible and Future*, 248.

⁴⁵For an excellent discussion of this point see Hoekema, *Bible and Future*, 249-250 and Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian & Reformed, reprint, 1986) 167-171.

⁴⁶Blomberg, 316. Cf. Fee, 786 and Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 1275-1280.

⁴⁷On the exact relationship of Adam to us see Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998) 270-297; Anthony Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986) 133-167; Henri Blocher, *Original Sin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).

⁴⁸There is a textual issue of whether

v. 49 should read the future indicative, "we shall wear," or the aorist subjunctive, "let us wear." I have followed the standard reading of the future, yet it is still a disputed point. For contrary viewpoints see Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 1288-1289, who opts for the future, and Fee, 794-795, who opts for the aorist subjunctive.

⁴⁹Hoekema, *Bible and Future*, 251. Fee, 802, n. 28, makes the important observation that the *dei* is not a necessity of the natural order, but it is a divinely ordained eschatology.

⁵⁰For more on the meaning of "mystery" (*mystērion*) see Fee, 800; P. T. O'Brien, "Mystery" in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. D. G. Reid, et al. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press) 621-623.

⁵¹There is a huge amount of discussion surrounding the eschatological timing of all of these events depending upon one's millennial outlook. For more on these issues and the views surrounding them see Darrell Bock, ed. *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999) and C. Marvin Pate, ed. *Four Views on the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998). In biblical thought the trumpet is a metaphor to speak of the end (cf. Joel 2:1; Zech 9:14; Matt 24:31; 1 Thess 4:16; Rev 8:2-9:14). Most admit vv. 51-52 contain imagery and language that closely resembles 1 Thess 4:13-18. For some, both of these texts have been used to demonstrate a rapture of the church that will either be a "pre-," "mid-," or "post-tribulational." The debate is certainly a complicated one that involves many other texts

and theological arguments, but in the case of 1 Corinthians 15, it is difficult to argue that Paul is not conceiving of the sounding of the trumpet and the believers' transformation simultaneous with the *parousia* of our Lord Jesus Christ. For more on the rapture debate see Paul D. Feinberg, Gleason L. Archer, and Douglas J. Moo, *The Rapture: Pre-, Mid-, or Post-Tribulational?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984); cf. Hoekema, *Bible and Future*, 109-238.

⁵²Fee, 803.

⁵³For a wise and excellent discussion of whether our souls are immortal see Hoekema, *Bible and Future*, 86-91.

⁵⁴For a further development of these points see Grudem, 831-835.

⁵⁵Hoekema, *Bible and Future*, 251-252.