

Pastor Don Nelson

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Beverly ECC, Chicago, IL

“NEW HOPE” (Part 2)
First Corinthians 15:35-58

☼ I cannot wait until {Rev 11:15} **“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his [Christ]”!**

☼ I cannot wait until {1 Th 4:16} **“The Lord [comes] down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God”!**

☼ I cannot wait until we see {Rev 21:10} **“the Holy City”** descending, and Heaven and Earth are joined!

☼ I cannot wait until God wipes {Rev 21:4} **“every tear from [our] eyes”** and there is {Rev 21:4} **“no more death or mourning or crying or pain”!**

☼ I cannot wait until {Rom 8:21} **“Creation itself [is] liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God”!**

We can have confident hope for our future in Christ, for {1 Co 15:20} **“as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive in this order: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.”**

Please turn with me to 1st Corinthians 15 {p 1,173}.

☐ V 35 ~ **“But someone will ask, ‘How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?’”**

Resurrection-talk gives pagan Greeks the willies. They despise the body as so much dung, so the idea of *glorification* has never crossed their minds. When they hear the word *resurrection* they envision zombies leaking putrid fluid and dropping bits of rotting flesh as they claw their way out of the grave.

These Christ Followers in Corinth were pagans themselves, not so long ago. Naturally, they want to know: What will the resurrection body be like?

☐ In vv 36-41 Paul assures us that resurrection is not reanimation of the old, mortal body.

He drives home the point with a series of metaphors:

○ Consider a seed and its plant. They are closely related, but the sprout has a new and different body.

○ Likewise, living creatures have similar tissues and bodily functions, but who could confuse a human with a guppy, an eagle, or a hippopotamus?

○ Visualize space, with its glorious sun, moon, and stars. Imagine the surface of our planet with its towering mountains, echoing canyons, and immense seas. God is fully capable of organizing the same basic building blocks in countless ways.

Our resurrection will be nothing like “The Night of the Living Dead”; it will resemble Easter morning.

☐ Next, in vv 42-44 Paul contrasts our new, resurrection bodies with our old, natural ones.

⊕ 1) **“The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable.”**

The clocks on these old bodies start running down from the moment of conception. We will all die.

But our new bodies will be immortal. They will never fall prey to injury, illness, or the slow decay of aging.

⊕ 2) **“It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory.”** The Creator designed these old bodies to physically manifest his goodness. They still do that, to a degree, but because of sin, they have failed to fulfill their purpose.

Our new bodies *will* display God’s greatness and splendor. Others who see us will be stunned

(especially those who are just being polite when they say how nice we look now! ☺). I don't know if there will be mirrors in the New Jerusalem, but if there are, and if you happen to catch a glimpse of yourself as you pass by, you are going to say: "Whoa!"

⊕ 3) **"It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power."**

These old bodies operate within narrow limits: I can see with my eyes, but only so far; I can run with my legs, but only so fast; and so forth.

Our new bodies will be far less restricted. After Christ rose He passed through locked doors, appeared and vanished instantly, and defied gravity. You and I will enjoy similar powers.

⊕ 4) **"It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body."**

Many people assume that "**natural**" is a synonym for *physical*, while "**spiritual**" means *non-corporeal* or *ethereal*. Yet 1 Co 15:1-25 convincingly asserts that our new bodies will have tangible, material substance – just as Christ's resurrection body does.

Yet that substance will be different. While these old bodies can function only in this small slice of reality that we call "**natural**"; our new bodies will be suited for multiple dimensions that include physical objects, God's presence, and everything in between.

The new, resurrection body will be imperishable, glorious, powerful and spiritual, like Christ's body. Raise your hand if you want one of those.

❑ Not everyone will receive a body like this. How can we get one? Paul explains in vv 45-49: "**The first Adam**" (the one created with Eve in Genesis 1:27) "**became a living being;**" but "**the last Adam,**" (the Lord Jesus) is

a life-giving spirit.... The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of

the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.

Eternal body-type is determined by present line of descent. All humans are sons of Adam and daughters of Eve. {Jn 1:12-13} "**Yet to all who**" receive Jesus, "**who [believe] in his name, he [gives] the right to**" also become children "**of God.**" In the resurrection God will give us new bodies like Christ's.

? It is exciting, isn't it!

I must admit that until a few years ago this did not matter much to me. I thought the promise of a resurrection body was something to look forward to, but that it had little or no relevance in the here and now.

I was wrong. But it is a good question, one we have to ask: what difference does this make for our lives now?

◆ This resurrection hope of 1 Co 15:35-49 has several life-changing repercussions. Here are two.

✚ 1st) Resurrection Hope obliges Christ Followers to take every human being seriously. We do not have to agree with our neighbors' false beliefs or approve of their sinful actions, but we must take them seriously.

C.S. Lewis put it beautifully {The Weight of Glory}:

It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses [lower-case "g"], to remember that the duller ... most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now,

you would be strongly tempted to worship [since they are clothed in a resurrection body], **or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare** [as they embody the death of Hell]....**There are no “ordinary” people. You have never talked to a mere mortal.**

✠ 2nd) Resurrection hope compels Christ Followers to make disciples.

Knowing what we do about the resurrection life, and that **“Salvation is found in no one else”** but Jesus (Ac 4:12), we are accountable to invite into the Kingdom those who are on the outside, and to help those who are inside draw nearer to Christ. Love demands it!

□ I want to cover a little more ground (OK, a lot more – but briefly!). Please look at 1 Corinthians 15:50-58.

◆ Paul outlines two more life-changing repercussions of resurrection hope here.

□ Vv 50-55 ~ The last trumpet will sound, and **“we will be changed....then the saying...will come true: ‘Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?’”**

✠ 3rd) Resurrection hope liberates Christ Followers from the fear of death.

Death stirs up strong emotions: anxiety about bodily discomfort, regret for tasks unfinished, and the sadness of separation. The most painful is fear: fear of annihilation, fear of judgment, fear of hell.

The promise of resurrection for God’s children calms our fears. It gives Christ Followers confidence to face death with courage, even anticipation.

□ 1 Co 15 ends at v 58. Paul urges, **“Therefore”** – and this is an important word. It means, *In light* of these truths, *As a result* of this revelation, *It follows* from these teachings – **“Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, 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.”

This refers back to 1 Co 1:1-25, which discusses bodily resurrection and its connection with God’s kingdom. If you were not here last week, I urge you to read my sermon notes.

The upshot is that our ultimate hope is not just going to Heaven when we die; it is the completion of God’s Kingdom and our resurrection, the fulfillment of the words we pray so often {Mt 6:10}: **“Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”**

When we make a new disciple, God’s kingdom and our resurrection draw nearer.

When we help each other obey Jesus, God’s kingdom and our resurrection draw nearer.

When we embody the Beatitudes recorded in Mt 5, God’s kingdom and our resurrection draw nearer.

When we feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the sick, or visit the prisoner, all for the Lord’s sake, God’s kingdom and our resurrection draw nearer.

✠ Hence, 4th) Resurrection hope energizes Christ Followers to build for God’s Kingdom.

{1 Co 15:51-52} **“I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.”**

I cannot wait! How about you?