

Date: April 21, 2019
Series: Easter Sunday 2019

THE HOW, WHAT, AND WHEN OF OUR FUTURE RESURRECTION

(1 Corinthians 15:35-58)

Our text this morning is from the famous resurrection passage 1 Corinthians 15. Many pastors will be preaching today from vv. 1-11, but I would like us to look at a section of chapter 15 that is often neglected (beginning with v 35).

When you read **verse 35**, it is obvious that there were some believers in Corinth that struggled with the idea that, after they died, their earthly bodies would be made alive and transformed into an actual body with flesh and bone like Christ's resurrected body.

In v. 20, Paul said to the Corinthian believers:

"But now Christ is risen from the dead..." and then **in v. 23**:

"...even so, in Christ, all shall be made alive."

Paul was telling those believers that just as Christ's earthly body was resurrected, their bodies would ALSO be resurrected.

But Paul also knew that there were some that struggled with that idea (just as people do today). And that's why, **starting in v. 35**, Paul says these words:

³⁵ But someone will say, "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?"

This morning, I would like us to look at Paul's answer to those two questions as well as another question that He answers later in vv. 51-58.

Let's begin with an interesting story about what archaeologists call "grave goods." In an Illinois newspaper, an article said:

The concept of **burying objects with the dead** has been around for a long time. Ancient Egyptians interred food and everyday objects, even furniture, in hopes of having access to them in the afterlife. An ancient Chinese emperor had an **army of 6,000 terra cotta soldiers** buried with him for his protection after death. [BTW, they were colorfully painted when originally unearthed, but air soon caused colors to fade.]

According to surveyed funeral directors, an increasing number of families are depositing memorabilia in their deceased loved one's casket. Some caskets even have a drawer for mementos, and some above-ground grave sites have glass-covered niches where objects can be viewed permanently. Golfers are buried with balls and clubs. Gamblers are laid to rest with dice and a winning hand. One man, who was rarely without his phone, was buried with his cell.

In the Midwest, what is buried with a person may imply more than sentimental honor. Occasionally, a farmer in rural Illinois will lose a hand or a foot to farm equipment. It is not

unheard of for the maimed farmer to request that the detached limb be saved for personal reasons.

According to Robert Ninker, executive director of the Illinois Funeral Ethics Association, the amputated appendages are sometimes embalmed and frozen so that when the farmer dies, the lost limb can be reunited with its rightful owner.

It is typical for the morticians not to restore the corpse to wholeness until after the body has been viewed at the wake or funeral. This prevents mourners from shock or alarm, while at the same time fulfilling the request of the deceased.

“The farmer knew,” Ninker said, “he was going to be put in the casket whole.”

This story tells us **that people wonder about the afterlife**. They are concerned about what will happen and what will be there for them on the other side. Our text in 1 Corinthians gives us insight about the afterlife, and that is what I would like to speak to you about this morning.

Title: The How, What, and When of Our Future Resurrection

(Prayer)

We do not know who to attribute the following quotation to, but it is a tremendous quote, regardless of who said it:

"Death used to be an executioner, but the gospel has made him just a gardener."

For a non-believer, death is an executioner. All hope is cut off at death. But for the believer in Christ, death is no longer an executioner, but simply a gardener. Yes, death still plants us in the ground, but, because of the promise of Christ in the gospel, we will one day become a thing of glory and beauty in the presence of God.

The first question this morning concerns the **HOW** of our resurrection body.

1. **How will we be resurrected from dead?**

That's v. 35: "**How** are the dead raised up?"

The answer? The same way a seemingly dead seed is put in the ground and yet, later, bursts forth with life. Look at v. 36:

1 Corinthians 15:36–38 (NLT)----When you put a seed into the ground, it doesn't grow into a plant unless it dies first.³⁷ And what you put in the ground is not the plant that will grow, but only a bare seed of wheat or whatever you are planting.³⁸ **Then God gives it the new body he wants it to have.** A different plant grows from each kind of seed.

How will be resurrected from the dead? By the power and grace of God! Just as God turns a simple orange seed into a beautiful tree filled with

fruit one day, God will turn the seed of our dead bodies into a beautiful, new, and eternal body:

Philippians 3:21-----²¹ He [Christ] will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, **using the same power** with which he will bring everything under his control.

So the answer to the question, “How will we be resurrected from the dead?” is this: **By God’s grace** (“God *gives* it” --- our glorified bodies are a gift from God that ALL believers will receive) and, we will be resurrected **by God’s power**. Whether our bodies are buried at land or sea, or are dust inside a cremation urn, Christ will use the same power with which He created the universe, transform those elements, and give us a glorious body like His own that will last for all eternity.

Question number one answers the “how” question. Now question #2 (the “**what**” question):

2. **What kind of body will we have?**

We have already partially answered this question in saying our resurrected body will be an actual material body (with flesh and bones) like Christ had after He rose from the dead. And BTW, He didn’t look like Jerry Seinfeld after He rose from the dead, He still looked like Jesus of Nazareth. We will all recognize one another after we are raised and given our new bodies. Look at v. 42 (I have **put it in a chart** so you can understand it better):

Earthly Body	Resurrected Body
The body is sown in corruption [it’s decaying]	it is raised in incorruption [no more sickness/decay]
It is sown in dishonor [it’s buried under dirt]	it is raised in glory [or, magnificence]
It is sown in weakness [no strength]	it is raised in power
It is sown a natural body [earthly/temporary]	it is raised a spiritual body [not immaterial, but glorified/eternal]

What kind of body will we have?

1 John 3:2-----² 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 (cf., 1 Cor. 15:49).

Question number one answered the “how” question (we are raised by the power of God). Question #2 answered the “what” question (we will have a body like Christ’s). Question #3 is the when question”

3. **When will believers get their new bodies?**

The answer: When we meet Christ in the air at the Rapture of the Church! Look at v. 51:

1 Corinthians 15:51–53 (NLT)-----⁵¹ **But let me reveal to you** a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! ⁵² It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. **And we who are** living will also be transformed. ⁵³ For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.

We do not know when the Rapture will take place. We do know it can happen at any moment. Jesus said He is coming like a thief in the night (i.e., unexpectedly).

So how are we to live? Look at v. 58:

1 Corinthians 15:58 (NLT)-----⁵⁸ So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable [stand your ground!]. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless.

Now, someone might say, “Bob, you have told us about the resurrection of believers. What about those who do not believe in Christ for everlasting life? Does the Scripture say anything about them?”

Yes it does. Jesus said:

John 5:28–29-----...the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice ²⁹ and come forth—those who have done good [= believed], to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil [= not believed], to the resurrection of condemnation.

And in Revelation 20:13, it says:

Revelation 20:13, 15-----The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works ... **And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.**

Invitation:

---believers: “Are you abounding in the work of the Lord?”

---**unbelievers**: “Wouldn’t you like to know that your name is written in God’s Book of Life?”