

1 Corinthians 15E

- It's time for Paul to wrap up his teaching on resurrection
 - He's rebuked those in Corinth who would suggest resurrection isn't possible
 - He's explained it's importance to the Gospel
 - He's reminded them of Christ's own resurrection
 - He's explained the centrality of resurrection to Jesus' mission of reversing Adam's mistake
 - And he's shown the church that their cherished Christian rituals point to the reality of resurrection
 - So all that's left is for Paul to explain to the church the manner of their coming resurrection
 - Because at the heart of the church's doubts was a lack of appreciation for how the Lord can accomplish something so incredible
 - How can it be possible for a dead body that's been decomposing in the grave for centuries to return to a living vessel?
 - The seeming impossibility of it all was probably the main reason the church succumbed to this false teaching
- Let's see how Paul answers these objections

[1Cor. 15:35](#) But someone will say, "How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?"

[1Cor. 15:36](#) You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies;

[1Cor. 15:37](#) and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else.

[1Cor. 15:38](#) But God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own.

- In v.35 Paul refers to a person asking how the dead will be raised and what kind of body they will have?
 - It's important to understand the tone of the question as Paul repeats it

- This was a questions begin asked by those in Corinth who didn't believe in resurrection
- The question itself was intended to mock the very idea of resurrection
- Put another way, the questioner was asking, "How could it even be possible for God to raise a dead body? Imagine the condition of such a body!
- The question pointed to the decaying process of dead bodies and to the destructive nature of death itself to discredit the idea of resurrection
 - How can a body that's decomposed be brought to life?
 - Or what if that body is totally burned up?
 - Or what if the body is crushed by a rock or eaten by an animal?
 - Can you imagine the condition of such a resurrected body? Therefore, resurrection must be a ridiculous idea
 - Paul repeats the question here so he can answer this objection
- Notice his response begins with a strong statement: he calls those who harbor such thinking "fools"
 - At first glance we might wonder if it was proper for Paul to issue such a strong rebuke
 - Elsewhere Jesus said that the one who calls another a fool has sinned

[Matt. 5:22](#) "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ' You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You **fool**,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.

- But the context in this case makes clear Paul was not sinning in his use of this strong rebuke
- The meaning of the word fool in scripture is a person to discounts or excludes the power of God
- As Psalms says:

[Psa. 53:1](#) The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God,"

They are corrupt, and have committed abominable injustice;
There is no one who does good.

- In Matthew 5:22 Jesus gave an example of someone who uses the term fool in hateful manner to slander a brother
 - But here Paul is using the term in it's technical sense, as a description of this person's sinful mindset
 - Truly, the Corinthian church was discounting and ignoring the power of God when they claimed resurrection was impossible
 - They argued a believer wouldn't receive a new body, and in the process they were dismissing God's ability to do things beyond what we can imagine
 - So Paul wasn't uttering a hateful insult, as Jesus described
 - He was correctly labeling the mistaken thinking of the Corinthians
- Then in the second half of v.36, Paul moves to answering this foolish objection by reminding them of God's power to do the very thing they have been denying
 - Paul draws a comparison to another kind of resurrection involving seeds and plants
 - It's tempting to call this example metaphoric, but it's far more than metaphor
 - Paul's example of seeds yielding new life is a type of resurrection that transcends mere illustration
 - Paul is pointing out the miraculous power of God to turn one physical form into another, something that's evident in the everyday cycle of life on earth
 - Looking at Paul's example, God designed the reproduction of plants to depend on the implanting of seeds into the earth
 - Paul picks up on that pattern to teach that nothing new comes to life until it is first buried in the ground
 - But Paul says take note that the thing that we bury bears no resemblance physically to the plant that appears later

- In fact, you can't predict the appearance of a plant by looking at its seed
- God has chosen to assign a certain "body" or physical appearance to each plant as He wished
 - And that body originates from an earlier body - a seed - that is completely unlike itself
 - God makes this transformation happen around us everyday, and we take it for granted without giving it a second thought
 - Yet the critics of resurrection overlooked this daily miraculous transformation even as they claimed God can't grant us new bodies after our present body is buried
- Furthermore, once the new plant arrives, the seed that produced it is gone
 - It's not as though the old seed remains in the ground
 - The seed is literally transformed into the new body of the plant
 - And that new plant body is not only different from the seed in appearance, but it's much larger
 - Which means the material for the plant comes from somewhere beyond the materials present in the original seed
 - All these elements in Paul's example demonstrate God can use one thing to create something wholly new and different without being dependent on the structure, appearance or condition of the original material
- Next Paul broadens his examples beyond seeds and plants to address the vastness of God's creative powers

1Cor. 15:39 All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish.

1Cor. 15:40 There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another.

1Cor. 15:41 There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.

- !Paul reminds us that God's palette for creating physical bodies is vast and limitless

- Consider the universe of “bodies” we can observe to exist
- The bodies of men are different than that of animals, birds, fish, etc.
- The celestial bodies of the universe vary tremendously in physical construction from the sun to the moon and rest of the stars in the sky
- They differ in size, brightness, etc.
- If God can make a universe so diverse in appearance, why would we have reason to doubt His ability to construct a new body for us?
- Therefore, when the time comes for the Lord to assign each of us our resurrected body, He won’t be constrained by the condition or appearance of our first body
 - He isn’t required to reassemble our new body from the same molecules in our original body
 - Instead, Paul says God will construct a body suitable for eternal life in a heavenly realm, which requires He use all new material
 - Just as our first body was suited for physical birth and a physical life on earth, so our eternal bodies must be designed to share an eternal life with Christ
 - Since our earth has been cursed because of sin, our new bodies cannot share any material in common with the present world
 - We must be created all new, in the likeness of Christ, if we are to live eternally
- Therefore, we will enter into our new bodies by the power of God rather than by a physical birth
 - While our first body was made from the material of our parent’s bodies, our new body must be made in the likeness of Christ’s body
 - Just as our new spirit was born again in the likeness of Christ’s Spirit
 - The material for our new body will have a new, eternal source
 - Something beyond the present cursed creation

- Because our new body has a new purpose, it will have a new construction

[1Cor. 15:42](#) So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body;

[1Cor. 15:43](#) it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;

[1Cor. 15:44](#) it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

[1Cor. 15:45](#) So also it is written, "The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

[1Cor. 15:46](#) However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual.

[1Cor. 15:47](#) The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.

[1Cor. 15:48](#) As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly.

[1Cor. 15:49](#) Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.

- In our new existence, Paul says we will be imperishable
 - The Greek word for perishable means corrupt or killed
 - Our first body was constructed from materials that were already corrupted
 - Adam's sin placed all mankind in a state of corruption, of sin
 - His body and spirit became damaged goods, and therefore our first body was damaged goods too
 - But the new body we will receive at the resurrection will find it's source in Christ, so that He will construct for us a new, perfect body
 - And it will be an imperishable body
 - The word imperishable means incorruptible
 - It cannot be corrupted
 - We will be held in a state of sinlessness by the power of Christ
- Paul reiterates the example of the seed to emphasize the contrast between old and new
 - The first body is sown (buried) in dishonor

- The dishonor of our present body is our weakness in sin
- Our present bodies are corrupt and our physical death is proof of that corruption
- But after that death and planting in the ground, we come to our state of glory
- We can see the death process as a process of bringing new life, a life of glory
- Likewise, a seed is small and weak compared to the strength of the plant that emerges
 - So will our new body be strong in the face of temptation to sin
 - We will never again experience the weakness of sin'
 - We will enjoy Christ's power in us to obey in perfection
- While our original body was natural, living according to the desires of the flesh
 - Our new body will be spiritual, driven to serve and please the living God
 - Our thoughts and desires will be according to His nature, rather than according to a sinful nature
- And if we have experienced an earthly, sinful existence, then we can be sure we will also experience the heavenly, eternal life that follows
 - Just as the seed experienced an existence of one kind, so will that seed know a new existence as a plant living a new life
 - Seeing Paul's example fit so perfectly in describing resurrection should give us pause to wonder if God prepared the seed in Creation just to support this illustration
 - Did the Lord give us seeds leading to plants so that we might better grasp His power to resurrect our dead bodies?
 - It seems so
 - Which reminds us how much care God has given to ensuring His children are well-prepared for our coming resurrection
 - Today we bear the image of the earth

- We are made of dirt, as was Adam
- We are sinful as the Adam
- And our bodies are cursed to die, as is the entire earth
- But by our faith in Jesus Christ, we have reason to look forward to a new resurrected and heavenly life
 - We will be made of an eternal material
 - We will be perfect as Christ is perfect
 - And we will have escape the curse of death as Christ Himself conquered death
- And now Paul reveals one of the most powerful mysteries of the New Testament age: the manner of our resurrection

[1Cor. 15:50](#) Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

[1Cor. 15:51](#) Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, [1Cor. 15:52](#) in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

[1Cor. 15:53](#) For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

- First, Paul repeats that the bodies of this world are simple unable to enter into a heavenly realm
 - Our sinful natures bar us from entry into heaven
 - So that even though we have been saved by grace, our salvation cannot undue the sinful nature of our present bodies
 - Our bodies must be replaced so that we are prepared for the eternal life
 - And then in v.51 Paul begins to explain the manner of that replacement, unveiling a mystery to the church
 - The word mystery in the New Testament has a very specific meaning
 - The word doesn't mean something mysterious or confounding

- It means a truth concerning God's plan which was hidden from our understanding until an appointed time it is to be revealed
- Paul was given the honor of revealing a total of 8 mysteries to the church
- Here we see him revealing one of those 8 hidden truths: the manner of the resurrection
- To begin, Paul says we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed (often a phrase posted on church nursery walls)
 - Sleep is Paul's euphemism for physical death
 - The physical death of the body has long been described in polite, kind terms
 - Today, we speak of passing away, expiring, going home, etc.
 - In Paul's day, the popular euphemism was "to sleep" because the death of a body resembles someone sleeping
 - Paul says we will not all die
 - The we is a reference to the church saints (the believers in the church)
 - Not all church saints will experience a physical death
 - Most will obviously, and so far everyone has
 - But Paul tells us that God plans to allow some Christians to escape the death experience
 - Nevertheless, we all must be changed, Paul says
 - The Greek word for changed can also carry the meaning of being exchanged
 - We must all give up our current body for the eternal body, as Paul has explained already
 - For most Christians, that change involves first the death of the body followed by a receiving of a new body at some later point
- But for some Christians, the new body will come by way of an exchange without the death of the first body
 - This exchange happens incredibly fast, virtually instantaneously

- In v.52 Paul says this exchange will come in a moment
- The Greek word for moment is atomos
 - It means an indivisible moment of time
 - We took our English word atom from this Greek word to describe an indivisible particle
- Paul adds that it will be in the twinkling of an eye, which is that brief flash of light reflected by a person's eye
- So the moment we exchange our old body for our new body involves practically no time passing...it's instantaneous
- Next, Paul says it happens at the last trumpet
 - The reference to a last trumpet is a statement that any practicing Jew in Israel would immediately recognize
 - It's a reference to the Jewish feast of Trumpets or Rosh Hashanah
 - It is the first of the Fall feast on the Jewish calendar
 - The feast begins with a series of trumpet blasts and ends with one long, great blast called the *tekiah gedolah*
 - Paul's reference to this trumpet indicates that the Feast of Trumpets is fulfilled by the resurrection of the Church
- Some have concluded that the trumpet mentioned here is a reference to the trumpet judgments in the first half of tribulation, but this possibility is precluded by the timing of the books of the canon
 - When Paul wrote this letter, the book of Revelation had yet to be written
 - So the Corinthian church (and likely Paul himself) had no knowledge of the coming trumpet judgments of tribulation
 - Yet Paul says "the trumpet" as if he expected his audience in Corinth to know about this specific trumpet
 - The only trumpet known to Paul and the church in his day would have been the last trumpet blown at Rosh Hashanah
- As the trumpet associated with Rosh Hashanah blows, the resurrection will begin

- First, Paul says those Christians who have already died by the time this moment arrives will be the first to receive their new eternal bodies
 - Until this moment, these Christians have been without a physical body since the day their bodies died
 - They have existed as spirits only, present in the heavenly realm with the Lord waiting for this day
 - At the commencement of the resurrection, the Lord rewards their waiting by assigning them new bodies before anyone else
 - They are raised, that is resurrected, into imperishable bodies, just as Paul has described earlier
- Next, those who are alive will undergo the exchange of old bodies for new bodies
 - This process is explained in a little more detail in another of Paul's letters written years later to a church in Asia Minor

[1Th. 4:13](#) But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.

[1Th. 4:14](#) For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

[1Th. 4:15](#) For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

[1Th. 4:16](#) For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

[1Th. 4:17](#) Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

[1Th. 4:18](#) Therefore comfort one another with these words.

- Once again, Paul reassures the church that those who have already died in faith will not be left out of the resurrection
 - In fact, they will be the first to be raised, meeting the Lord in the air
 - And then we who remain (alive) are then caught up to meet Christ in the air to join the others in our new incorruptible bodies
- Why does the Lord orchestrate the manner of our resurrection in such a unique process, one that permits some believes to bypass physical death?

- There are two reasons as I see it...first, it's about numbers
 - Paul says that the church is a temporary fixture intended to bring Israel to jealousy
 - We get what Israel could have had, and we exist for a time to illustrate the Lord's kindness to a stubborn and disobedient Israel
 - But then Paul says once the Gentile church reaches it's appointed number, the church has met it's purpose and must end

Rom. 11:25 For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery – so that you will not be wise in your own estimation – that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;

- When the fullness (or complete number) of Gentiles has been reached, the church will be removed from the scene
 - The sudden resurrection of the church is designed to bring that conclusion precisely at an appointed number
 - The Lord doesn't wait for the last Christian to die naturally
 - He simply brings the end in a moment according to His timing
- Which is the second reason for a sudden departure of the church
 - It creates a sense of urgency and unpredictability to the event
 - If God waited until all Christians had died, then we would have no reason to be watching for the Lord's return much less to be ready for that moment
 - We would all simply just be waiting for our deaths, which drives far less urgency than it should
- Instead, the Lord warned us that His return for the Church is a ever-present possibility, one we must be ready for at any time

Matt. 24:42 "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.

Matt. 24:43 "But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into.

Matt. 24:44 "For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.

- Our removal will be a surprise so that we have good reason to be attentive to the Lord's commands while we wait
- Take nothing for granted; use everyday to please Him
- Finally, Paul wraps up his lesson on resurrection with a praise to the Lord for His plan to put an end to our mortality

[1Cor. 15:54](#) But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory.

[1Cor. 15:55](#) "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?"

[1Cor. 15:56](#) The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law;

[1Cor. 15:57](#) but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

- God's plan of redemption in Christ promises that His death and resurrection has won the victory over our enemy Death
 - But that victory won't be evident to us personally until our own death has been conquered
 - And the resurrection is the moment when death is swallowed up forever
 - Imagine death forever removed from your thinking
 - Imagine a day when your mortality and the mortality of others around you is completely removed from your mind and your experience, never to trouble you again
- Paul says the sting of death is sin
 - The Greek for sting means a stinger, the sharp point of attack
 - So the instrument of death's attack is our sin
 - Our sin is the "stinger" that set death into our flesh
 - And the power of that stinger comes because of God's Law
 - The power of the Law is in its ability to condemn men for their sin
- But the Lord granted us victory by meeting the requirement of the Law and also paying the penalty it required for sin...he won our victory over death
 - Thanks be to God for winning this victory for us!