

The Resurrection

AiF Level 2 - Unit 221



**Week 5 – Resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 and
2 Corinthians 4:7 – 5:10 and in the Gospels**

1 Corinthians 15

First Corinthians 15 is a carefully composed whole, with a balancing introduction and conclusion (**A** and **a** below), two lengthy main arguments (**B** and **b**), each in two parts (**B1** and **B2**, **b1** and **b2**), with a short middle section (**C**) in a different tempo. The balance can be seen in the following outline, including the similarity of the word-count in the matching sections:

- A** 15:1–11 (161 words): introduction: Paul’s gospel, and his own role
- B** 15:12–28 (246 words): the question and the basic answer
 - [**B1** 15:12–19 (111 words); **B2** 15:20–28 (135 words)]
 - C** 15:29–34 (81 words): practical interlude
- b** 15:35–49 (214 words): what sort of body?
 - [**b1** 15:35–41 (110 words); **b2** 15:42–9 (104 words)]
- a** 15:50–58 (148 words): conclusion: the mystery revealed¹

The argument is, in fact, an exposition of the future resurrection of all those who belong to the Messiah, set out as an argument about new creation. Many ideas in the chapter are drawn from Genesis 1-3. This chapter also sits firmly within Jewish ideas on resurrection; a resurrection of the body by the creator God who will at the same time bring justice to the world – this is the turning point between the ‘present age’ and the ‘age to come’.

The aim of chapter 15 is to answer the challenge of verse 12: some of the Corinthian Christians had been saying that there was no resurrection of the dead.

The argument of chapter 15, runs as follows: **what the creator god did for Jesus is both the *model* and the *means* of what he will do for all Jesus’ people.**

1 Corinthians 15:1–11

The gospel hangs on the resurrection. In the tradition, then, firm, universal and early, we find unambiguous evidence that the earliest Christians believed both that Jesus had been bodily raised and that this event fulfilled the scriptural stories.

1 Corinthians 15:12–28

If there is no resurrection then the answer to the problems that Paul has been dealing with does not exist. Paul’s argument is that how

¹ N. T. Wright, [The Resurrection of the Son of God](#), Christian Origins and the Question of God (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2003), 312.

believers live in regard to their sexuality, arguments between themselves, marriage, idols and choice of food is profoundly influenced by their belief or not in the resurrection. If there is not future coming age, initiated by the resurrection then there is no real reason to live life any differently for the neighbours.

V21-22 The future resurrection is guaranteed, in other words, by Jesus' status as the truly human being, the one who fully bears the divine image. The word used for 'Adam' here is the Hebrew word used for 'mankind' in Genesis 1 and 2.

Paul's use of **Ps 8** clearly places Jesus as the true human and the true Israelite. (see v6) The human task and the messianic task dovetail together: the Messiah, the true Human One, will rule the world in obedience to God. This task is carried out during the present age by Jesus, constituted as Messiah in virtue of his resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:29–34

Four different subjects in five verses, with resurrection the thread that links them all; four small windows, each affording a glimpse of the continuity between the present life and the future one. Underneath is the logic which sustained verses 12–19: if the denial of the resurrection were to be upheld, think what that would actually mean for Christian symbolic practice, for Paul's own apostolic lifestyle, for the Christian ethic.

1 Corinthians 15:35–49

The key to understanding the next fifteen verses is to realize that they, like verses 20–28, are built on the foundation of **Genesis 1 and 2**. This, too, is part of Paul's theology of new creation. **Its climax comes in the last verse (49)**, where Paul gives the final answer to his opening question: what sort of body will the dead receive when they are raised?

1 Corinthians 15:42–49

'So it is with the resurrection of the dead.' This is Paul's main conclusion, drawing the argument together into a dense statement of how the new, resurrection body will differ from the present one, and of how this will be accomplished. Paul continues with the language of sowing and harvesting, knowing it here to be metaphorical:

^{42b}It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; ⁴³it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴it is sown as a body natural (*soma psychikon*), it is raised as a body spiritual (*soma pneumatikon*).

These four contrasts are Paul's explanation of what the resurrected human body will be like;

1. Sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption.
2. Sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory
3. Sown in weakness, it is raised in power
4. Sown as a *soma psychikon* (a natural body), it is raised as a *soma pneumatikon* (spiritual body). As we noted in our previous discussion words ending with *kos* mean that these two descriptors are speaking of what powers or animates the body not what makes up the body.

This gives more information to the message of Philippians 3:21 – our resurrected bodies will be like Jesus, powered by the Spirit.

This powering by the Spirit is how Jesus lived and was resurrected. Matt 3:16, John 1:32-33, Luke 4:1-2, Rom 1:4. While we are currently 'in Christ' and so powered by Holy Spirit to grow up into him, the resurrection places us in a position to be completely powered by the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 15:50–58

V58 - 'In the lord your labour'—your work for God's kingdom in the present—'is not in vain.' If the Messiah had not been raised, Paul's proclamation and the Corinthians' faith would have been 'in vain'; but the Messiah, the lord, was indeed raised; and proclamation, faith and continuing labour are thereby rescued from 'vanity', from futility. What is done 'in the lord' in the present will last into God's future.

2 Corinthians 4:7–5:10

The main thrust of the passage is to insist on seeing the present in the light of the future. The present is full of suffering, especially for the apostle; but he sees it as organically connected to the future in which there is resurrection (4:14), glory (4:17), a new body (5:1), and judgment (5:10).

2 Corinthians 4:7–15

This is one of the most vivid of Paul's 'present resurrection' passages, declaring not only that resurrection in the present meant a new kind of spiritual life, but that the life of Jesus should be manifest 'in our body' (verse 10), and even 'in our mortal flesh' (verse 11).

2 Corinthians 4:16–5:5

One good way in to the passage is to explore some of the obvious parallels in other Pauline expositions of similar themes. For example;

- 4:17 – Rom 8:17 suffering
- 4:18 – Rom 8:24-25 hope
- 5:4 – 1 Cor. 15:54 change of physicality

2 Corinthians 5:6–10

V10 – Paul completes this section with a similar idea he uses in 1 Cor. 15. Our deeds done in this body have continuity into the next body. Remember that judgement must happen before justice can be enacted.

Resurrection in the Gospels

Jesus had very little to say about resurrection but the context of his 'kingdom of God' preaching and teaching would place him firmly within the acceptance of the idea of resurrection as being the ushering in of the 'age to come' or the kingdom.

Mark 8:35

Mark 9:34.

Mark 10:29-31

Mark. 8:31/Matt. 16:21/Luke. 9:22.

Mark. 9:31/Matt. 17:22/Luke. 9:44.

Mark. 10:33/Matt. 20:18/Luke. 18:31

Mark. 14:58/Matt. 26:61/John 2:19

Mark 9:9-10

Mark. 12:18–27/Matt. 22:23–33/Luke. 20:27–40. –

This question then is not a theological one but rather a political one which sits within the context for the enemies of Jesus of 'how can we kill him'?

Luke 16:19-31 - The story 'cannot claim eyewitness authority as a literal description of the fate of the dead. It has only the status of parable.' The point of the story is the failure of the rich man to take responsibility for helping his fellow Jew. 'Resurrection' is coming forwards into the present in Jesus' ministry, but those who cannot see it and reorder their lives accordingly are in danger of losing all.

Luke 23:43 – 'Be with me in paradise' παράδεισος is a loan word from old Persian, where the *pāiri-daēza* denotes an enclosure, then the park surrounded by a wall. In Greek it occurs first in Xenophon for the parks of the Persian king and nobility. Already by the 3rd cent. B.C. it can then be used generally for a "park." In Jewish Greek from the LXX on, it is used especially for the garden of God in the creation story (LXX Gn. 2:8–10, 16 etc.). More exactly God's garden as distinct from secular parks.

John 5:24-29 - It shows that those still-future events are casting their light before them, so that the reactions of people to Jesus, in belief or unbelief, are true present signs of their future fate.

John 6:39, 44, 50, 54 – the now and the future are connected

John 11:21-27

John 14:2 - Other references to 'my father's house' clearly refer to the Temple, and it is likely that Jesus is using the image of the many apartments in the large Temple complex as a picture of the many 'rooms' which will be provided in the heavenly world for which the Temple is both the earthly counterpart and the point of intersection. The word here for 'dwelling-place' is *mone*, which is cognate with the word *meno*, 'abide', a frequent and powerful Johannine word which encapsulates the notion of the believer making his or her place of abode in or with Jesus. **The normal meaning of *mone*, though, is of the temporary resting-place, or way-station, where a traveller would be refreshed during a journey.** The 'dwelling-places' of this passage are thus best understood as safe places where those who have died may lodge and rest, like pilgrims in the Temple, not so much in the course of an onward pilgrimage within the life of a disembodied 'heaven', but while awaiting the resurrection which is still to come.