

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JUNE 4TH - 5TH, 2022 // BOOK OF 1 CORINTHIANS

BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD? (1 CORINTHIANS 15:29-34)

Some within the church at Corinth were **denying the physical, bodily resurrection** for believers and downplaying the importance of **Christ's resurrection**.

- Paul established the **reality** of the resurrection (vs. 1-11), **the necessity for believing** the resurrection (vs. 12-19), and **the sequence** of the resurrection (vs. 20-28).
- Now he will address a troublesome practice that was occurring within this church - **baptism for the dead**.

Some people within this church were practicing the **superstitious and pagan custom** of vicarious baptism of the dead (vs. 29).

- Paul doesn't approve of this practice; he simply says that if there is no resurrection, **why does this wrongful custom even exist?**
- There was a glaring inconsistency in this practice – because if the dead aren't raised, **there would be no reason to be baptized for them**.

The truth is that **salvation is a matter of personal responsibility** – every person must consciously respond to the work of Christ in this life.

- You and I **cannot respond for our loved ones, friends, or family**, but we can faithfully share the gospel to them and live out our faith publicly.
- We can also **commit to praying for them** and asking God to soften their hearts.

If there's **no future resurrection**, not only did this wrongful practice of baptism on behalf of the dead not make sense, but **Paul's life of suffering didn't add up either** (vs. 30-32).

- Paul's ministry was fraught with danger "every hour" and he claimed to "die every day" – he **risked his life every day** to proclaim the gospel, even facing violent and **wild opponents in places like Ephesus** (Acts 19:21-41).

But if this life is all that there is, **hedonism makes a lot of sense**, and Paul's lifestyle of suffering most certainly did not (vs. 32b).

- If there's no resurrection and **future judgment to consider**, this life "under the sun" is all that we've got – which makes for a pretty **miserable existence** ("vanity," Ecclesiastes).
- Knowing the truth about our resurrection should **affect the way we live** (vs. 33-34).

Those who **denied the resurrection were deceived** and were corrupting and influencing sincere believers within this church.

- "**Bad company ruins good morals**" is actually a quote by the Greek poet Menander, and it points to the reality that we will become just like the company we keep.
- "**Show me your friends and I will show you your future.**"

If you **surround yourself with people** who do not take seriously the reality of eternity and the person of Jesus, you will be lulled into a drunken stupor and led into a vain and meaningless lifestyle of folly, **shame, and sin** (vs. 34).

- "Some have no knowledge of God" – **having real knowledge of God has less to do** with head knowledge and more to do with how you put your faith into practice in your lifestyle.

THE RESURRECTION BODY (1 CORINTHIANS 15:35-49)

Paul will answer **two questions** – how the dead are raised and what kind of body they will have when they're raised (vs. 35).

- It's a bit funny how Paul addresses his imaginary questioner – "**You foolish person!**" (vs. 36)
- The word "**foolish**" (**aphron**) just means a person who lacks perspective and is short-sighted – **someone who hasn't considered** the bigger picture.

THE ANALOGY OF THE SEED (VS. 36-38)

When you **plant a garden**, what goes into the ground looks different than what comes up out of the ground – one is "**dead**," **the other is alive**.

- When you plant a wheat seed, **a big wheat seed doesn't come up**. Instead, a stalk of wheat grows from that seed.
- When the body of a believer is buried, **it's like a seed that is sown**.

The body of the believer goes into the ground dead, but **will come out of the grave alive**.

- The body of the believer will look one way when they're placed into the ground, but **will be resurrected into a glorious, new resurrection body** that God has chosen.
- We will be glorified and more alive than we can imagine, but **our identity will be retained**.

LIVING AND HEAVENLY BODIES (VS. 39-41)

God doesn't have any problem coming up with **shapes, sizes, and substances** for each item in His universe.

- "**Not all flesh is the same,**" and "**stars differ from stars in glory.**"
- Our **resurrection bodies will be different from each other** and perfectly adapted for the environment of eternity and Heaven.

TWO KINDS OF BODIES (VS. 42-44)

It's hard to **grasp and comprehend** what our bodies will be like, so Paul gives us four contrasts between our mortal body and our **future resurrected body**.

- Perishable at death, imperishable at the resurrection.
- Dishonorable at death, glorious at the resurrection.
- Weak at death, powerful at the resurrection

- Natural at death, spiritual at the resurrection.

Our resurrected bodies will be...

- Awesome and powerful.
- Beautiful, unique, and perfectly designed by God.
- Eternal and spirit-filled (**perfect fullness of God in perfect communion with God**, Revelation 21:23).
- Perfectly Christlike—we will, "bear the image of the man of heaven". We will see Christ as He is and we will be like Him (1 John 3:2).

THE TWO ADAMS (VS. 45-49)

The "**first Adam**," created by God in the garden, was **made from the dust** and eventually returned to the **dust because of sin**.

- We were all born "**of the dust**" into this broken existence and will someday all return to the dust.
- Just as **Adam was the 1st of the human race**, so Christ is the 1st of those **who will be raised from the dead to eternal life**, the "**last Adam**."

Because Christ rose from the dead, He is "**a life-giving spirit**" who entered into a new form of existence as **the source of the spiritual life that will result in believers' resurrection**.

- While we **await our transformed, eternal body in the meantime** we're being transformed.
- If we're in Christ, **our inner self is being renewed "day by day"** (2 Corinthians 4:16) to look more like Christ.

MYSTERY & VICTORY (1 CORINTHIANS 15:50-58)

Our **perishable physical bodies** that we've received from Adam cannot inherit the kingdom of God, which is imperishable (vs. 50).

- Before we are taken to our **eternal home**, we must all be changed into resurrection bodies (vs. 51).
- This is a mysterious thing, but **it's a spiritual truth we receive by faith**.
- Not every believer will "**sleep**" (**die**) – some will still be here, alive on the earth, when Christ returns.

At the "**last trumpet**," God will give those dead in the Lord their resurrection bodies, and **then in an instant He will gather all His people** to meet Jesus in the air.

- All the redeemed on the earth at that time will rise up to **meet the Lord in the clouds**, and will receive their resurrection bodies (vs. 52).
- We **must be changed from perishable** and mortal to imperishable and immortal (vs. 53).

When this comes to pass, **humanity's greatest enemy** (death) will finally be defeated.

- Two OT references are quoted – "**Death has been swallowed up in victory**" (Isaiah 25:8), "**Where, o death, is your sting?**" (Hosea 13:14) – to say that the resurrection will be a **fulfillment of God's plan**.
- Death is a result of sin, and **sin only has power over us** if we're still under the law (vs. 56).

But in Christ, we **have victory over death**, sin, and the law.

- We're no longer **subject to the penalty of the law (death)**, and we're set free from sin.
- The defeat of death is only possible for those who live, "**through our Lord Jesus Christ**" – those who are not in Christ still very much live under **the sting of death** because they're still dead in their sins and live without hope of eternal life.

Because we know **how the story ends** and what our future will look like, we're to be (vs. 58)...

- "**Steadfast.**"
- We're **fixed and planted on the truth** of who Jesus is and what's most important in this life.
- "**Immovable.**"
- We don't **waver, change direction, cower in fear, or allow the cares** of this life to hijack our peace or purpose.

"**Always abounding in the work of the Lord.**"

- We're to go **beyond the expected measure in the work of the Lord**. Why? Because life is short, Jesus is coming back, and we'll stand before Him soon.
- "**Knowing that in the Lord our labor is not in vain.**"
- Jesus will remember and reward **our labors of love towards Him and others at the resurrection**. We're not to grow discouraged.

WHAT DOES OUR LIFESTYLE SAY ABOUT THE REALITY OF ETERNITY AND THE PERSON OF JESUS?

- It's so easy to get **lulled to sleep**, "into a drunken stupor" by our culture—but we've got to **wake up!**
- What does your calendar and bank statement reveal about the value of Jesus in your life and **the reality of eternity?**
- Meaningless **lifestyles of folly** and sin will someday **be exposed** for what they are.

WHERE DO WE FIND OUR HOPE, JOY, AND MEANING?

- Comfort, wealth, pleasure, beauty, and applause not only are elusive, they don't **satisfy the deepest longings** of the human heart.
- "If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world." -C. S. Lewis
- Hope, joy, and meaning can be **found in Christ**.

ARE WE REMAINING STEADFAST, IMMOVABLE, AND ABOUNDING IN THE WORK OF THE LORD?

- If a **trial, challenge, heartache, or suffering has moved you from your peace or purpose**, God wants to restore you.
- If you're **discouraged, tired, and feel like giving up in living for the Lord**, remember that someday **it will be worth it all**.