



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

“Like Him, or The Doctrine of Glorification”

TRANSCRIPT

One minute after seven thirty, seven thirty-one, so I think we should go ahead and begin.

Let's have a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for the privilege that is ours again tonight to turn to the word of God and to study again one of the great section of Holy Scripture and one of the great doctrines, and we pray, as we consider this great subject, that Thou would give us enlightenment and understanding. And if it should be, Lord, that there are some here that do not yet believe, we pray that Thou will give them the faith that saves. And so we commit to the hour to Thee for Thy blessing upon us.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Now, tonight our subject is “Like Him, or The Doctrine of Glorification.” And I'm going to read a rather lengthy passage from 1 Corinthians chapter 15 because it is a very important passage on this particular subject and you need to be very familiar with it. So I'll read it once and then later as we go through it, we will read some other portions of it again, 1 Corinthians chapter 15 in verse 35 through verse 58.

Now, it has been said, I think not quite truly but at least close to truth, that this is the longest answer ever given in the New Testament to any particular subject. Now, I’m not sure that that is really correct because the answer that our Lord gave on the Olivet Discourse within the Olivet Discourse, the questions that were asked about the second coming is probably a little lengthier than this. But it is true that in the Olivet Discourse he considers more than just one subject. So perhaps it is true to say that here we have the lengthy passage in all of the Bible, not just New Testament, on any one particular subject. And it is on the subject on the resurrection.

Now, in the first part of 1 Corinthians chapter 15 the apostle sets forth the resurrection of Jesus Christ and argues from his resurrection that there is, therefore, a resurrection of the dead, and, of course, that raises the inevitable question, well then how does this come to pass so far as we’re concerned and what kind of body are we going to have in the resurrection? And so Paul, beginning at verse 35 through verse 58, takes up that particular question. But we’re going to read 35 through 49.

Now, beginning with verse 35 Paul says.

“But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.”

Now, verse 42 notice the opening word,

“So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.”

Now, notice verse 45 and notice the way it begins,

“And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.”

Now, let’s stop with that and our subject tonight is “Like Him, or The Doctrine of Glorification.” Last spring in our series on systematic theology, we considered together some of the leading themes of the subject of anthropology or the doctrine of man and angelology or the doctrine of Satan and his angels. In Soteriology, which we have been studying this entire year since last September, we have studied the application of Christ’s redemptive work to man. In other words, we have, in our studies, stressed two basic things. First, rescue from our lost estate and that is necessary because we are sinners. We have fallen and we are fallen individuals. Since Adam fell we fell. We fell in Adam and we stand under divine judgment because of our condition.

Then we have studied this year the establishment in a new estate. That is all of the things that Jesus Christ has done and all of the things that God does in applying those things to us. So there are two basic ideas that we have been working over: rescue from a

lost estate, establishment in a new estate. It is expressed in the Old Testament, typically, in the experiences in the nation Israel for remember they came out of the land of Egypt which was a rescue from a bondage state, a state of bondage. And then, ultimately, they came into the land and that was the establishment in a new estate. And Israel’s experience remember is illustrative of our experience. As Moses put it in Deuteronomy chapter 6 in verse 23, “And he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he sware unto our fathers.” So he hath brought us out that he might bring us in. And the same thing is true in the spiritual life except that now we’re talking about the reality. He has brought us out from sin and divine condemnation. And he has brought us into the possession of all of the blessings of salvation which are bound up in Jesus Christ.

Now, glorification, which we are studying tonight, is the consummation of our personal salvation. It is, therefore, the consummation of the doctrine of Soteriology, because it is the last stage in the application of Christ’s work to us. It centers, of course, in the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, not the resurrection of Christ’s body that pertains to Christology, his resurrection. But we’re talking about our resurrection and that pertains to soteriology. So the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, that is, the necessary completion of the redemption of the cross of Jesus Christ, and it is the thing for which and to which we look forward, the resurrection of our bodies.

The denial of the bodily resurrection is a heathen doctrine. That is, if you deny the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, your doctrine is, essentially, the doctrine of pagans. That is, those who do not believe in the resurrection of the body. For the resurrection of the body is a Christian doctrine. When Paul preached it among the pagans of his day, he received different types of responses. For example, in Athens, which was the intellectual capital of Paul’s day, he preached the doctrine of the resurrection by saying “Because he had appointed the day in which he will judge in righteousness by that man, whom had ordained, whereof, he had given assurance unto all men in that he hath

raised him from the dead." And then we read "And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead some mocked." That was one response. Others said "We will hear thee again of this matter." So some mocked. Some said "We will give it reconsideration someday." Albeit, Luke adds in verse 34 "Certain men clave unto him and believe." So when Paul preached the resurrection, there was a lot of mockery, nonsense. Some even so misunderstood what he was saying that they thought that the resurrection was a new god, but they did not understand and they mocked. Some said "We will wait. We won't say no at the moment. We'll just hear you again about this." That is, they didn't make any decision. And then some believed. Down through the centuries almost, twenty of them now, there has echoed the mockery of the Aereopogus of Athens for men down through the centuries have laughed at the doctrine of the resurrection the body.

Plato, who of course lived before the time of Jesus Christ, argued for a future life in the Phaedo, but he said that it was not there was not a resurrection of the body, for actually, the Greeks believed that the body was a kind of prison for the soul. And so a resurrection among the Greeks would have been a doctrine which they would not have welcomed because they did not think that the body was anything more than a prison. So they didn't like the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, but they did like the doctrine of a future life and Plato argued for that. In fact, through Socrates, he has given us one of the noblest defenses apart from divine revelation of the hope of a future life. And it is a very wise defense of that doctrine, but he did not believe in the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. And that is one of the things that Paul had to deal with in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 because the Corinthians apparently came in touch with some Greeks who taught them or at least influenced them to believe that while we can accept the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we cannot accept the doctrine of the resurrection of our bodies. And so Paul, in order to prove the doctrine of the resurrection of Christ, pointed out that he was a man. And if he was a man and if he was raised from

the dead, then God intended to raise from the dead all who had believed in him. So Plato argued for a future life but he did not like a resurrection of the body.

The Greeks had a proverb the body is a tomb. I am a poor soul shackled to a corpse. And so this is the type of background against which Paul writes 1 Corinthians chapter 15. In the twentieth century, of course, we have other doctrines. We have not only the doctrine of life after death of the spirit and the extinguishing of the body, but we also have the doctrine of reincarnation, which is popular particularly among the eastern religions, which are very popular in the western world today.

And then we also have the belief that there is no life after death at all. That is when we die we just die. We are gone. There is no more you or me after we die. Lewis Johnson does not exist anymore after his spirit leaves his body because it goes into nothingness. There isn’t anything else. But Christians have always believed in the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. Now, let me stress that because it is a biblical teaching. We believe in the resurrection of the body not the resurrection of the spirit. The spirit does not die. The resurrection of the body is Christian doctrine. As Professor James Denney used to like to say “If we are not prepared to speak of the resurrection of the body, we should not speak of resurrection at all. For in the New Testament resurrection is resurrection of the body.

Now, there are one or two verses out of many, many versed which refer to a special aspect of life after death and use a term similar to the resurrection. But ordinarily in the New Testament, resurrection means resurrection of the body. So tonight we are going to look at the resurrection of the body; for this is central to the doctrine of glorification.

And Roman I in our outline - The nature of glorification, 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 35 through verse 49. And that, of course, is the passage in which Paul sets forth, in his lengthiest way, the physical side of glorification. And the other passage 1 John 3:1 through 3 is the passage in which Paul sets forth the moral side of glorification.

Now, tonight I’m not going to get this far. I want to try to cover the physical side of our resurrection and we want to look at this passage beginning at verse 35 through verse 49 and see what Paul says in answer to the question, what kind of a resurrection body are we going to have?

So capital A - The physical side. And turn now, if you haven’t already turned, to 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 35 through verse 49. But before we look at that passage I have two verses I want you to read with me. They are in Philippians chapter 3, Philippians chapter 3. Now, I know that’s asking an awfully lot of you to keep two passages in mind just after you’ve had a large charcoal-broiled steak and potatoes for dinner. That is, those of you who have had your wife cook your meal tonight. I know that is the kind of meal they cook for you, so you’re probably just a little sleepy. But if you could remember two passages. I saw several wives looking at their husband when I said that. So I’m sorry men apparently you had cereal tonight [Laughter] or a T.V. Dinner. Verse 20 of Philippians chapter 3 Paul says “For our conversation.” Now, that word as you know is the word citizenship, “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body.” Now, that word vile and body means body of humiliation, body of humiliation.

This afternoon, my little granddaughter she’s still in town. She cannot find it within her desire to leave town. Once she has looked upon me she just does not want to leave. And she has spoken her first word and she’s only ten weeks old. Now, I know you don’t believe me. [Laughter] But today when my daughter gave her carrots, I think, I don’t know whether it was the first time or not. But at least she doesn’t really like carrots too well that’s obvious because as she took the carrots and put it in her mouth, now she turned away like this, and then she very distinctly said a sound which was clearly to her grandfather “vile.” [Laughter] And, I know, that it was really a word because Mary in the other room said Lewis for goodness sakes stop teaching that little girl bad words already.

[Laughter] So she has spoken her first word but no one believes it really but her grandfather.

Now, notice verse 21 it says, you don’t believe either I can tell. [Laughter] “Who shall change our vile body,” our body of humiliation. Now, our body of humiliation is this body that we’re wearing around right now. And if you don’t believe that its a body of humiliation take a good look at yourself in the mirror in the morning. [Laughter] And for those of you who are young and bright and beautiful well just wait awhile and soon you will understand. “Who shall change our body of humiliation.” You see, every one of us the moment we are born begins to die. Now, isn’t that a sad thing. Every one of us the moment we are born begins to die, but it’s true. And, of course, if we recognize this and realize that Jesus Christ has offered us deliverance and we turn off to him and believe on him then we have the glorious opportunity of life in the knowledge of God throughout all the ages of eternity. And I am so glad that I was born and I am glad that I was born with a body of humiliation because now by the grace of God I have come to understand what Christ has done for me and what a glorious future there is for me upon faith in him.

So Paul says that “Jesus Christ when he comes is going to change our body of humiliation and he is going to fashion it like unto his own body of glory or his own glorious body, body of glory.” And if you don’t believe that that is going to take place notice the last clause, “According to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” In other words, the power of God is so great that he is able to perform even this great miracle.

Now, I think you can see that we have here a very short answer to the question, with what body do they come in the resurrection? Well they come in a body like Jesus Christ’s glorious body. So we’re going to one day exchange this body of humiliation for a body of glory, a body characterized by glory. Now, that we can say is the general answer to the question what kind of a resurrection body are we going to have? We’re going to have a body like Jesus Christ’s body. But Paul, of course, is going to tell us some more

specific things in this passage. But I want you to be sure to get the point that our body is, generally speaking, like Christ’s glorious body. If you want to know something of its powers, something of its capacities, observe what the New Testament has to say about the body of Jesus Christ.

Now, look at verse 35 in order that you may understand what Paul is saying in this passage. And notice that there are two questions. Paul likes to ask questions in his epistle and then answer them. And 1 Corinthians is one of his epistles in which he does that frequently. So he asks two questions in verse 35. He says “But some man will say someone will say, how are the dead raised up?” In other words, how do we pass from this life into the possession of a resurrection body? How are the dead raised up? That’s the first question. The second question is “And with what body do they come?” In other words, when they are raised up what kind of body do they have?

Now, Paul is a very logical man, ordinarily, and he answers the first question in verse 36. And he doesn’t waste any time on it either. In fact, he uses the word fool for the man who would even ask a question like that. But then in verse 37 through 49, he answers the second question, “And with what body do they come?” So the first question then questions the possibility of resurrection. How are the dead raised up? And the answer is “Fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened [is not made alive], except it die.” And so the answer is, generally speaking, the answer to the question how are the dead raised up is through death. It is through the experience of death. Now, death is not an essential, he will go onto point out, but death is the way by which the dead are raised up. So that’s the answer to the first question and he’s passed it off with that little word fool. So that question which questioned the possibility of the resurrection body is answered.

Now, the second question questions the nature of the body not the method of the resurrection, “With what body do they come?” Now, he will give us a rather lengthy explanation. Now, before we look at Paul’s explanation we want to be sure that we are

clear about two eras. Some say surprisingly that through the resurrection we are given the same body that we had before the same body. Now, there is a sense in which that is true. As we shall see in just a moment identity is one of the features that characterizes a resurrection body. In other words, I shall be able to look at you and you shall be able to look at me and there I something about the form and structure of our bodies which will enable you and I to recognize one another when we are in the presence of the Lord. So there is identity but identity is not the same as sameness. And some have suggested that we have just the same body same we had here.

Now, that is an error although it contains a modicum of truth. Most good errors contain a little bit of truth. That’s what makes them a good error one that counterfeits the truth. Now, the other side of the error is to say our bodies that we have in the resurrection are completely unrelated to the body that we have now. And some say that. So we want to guard ourselves against these two extremes. One, we have the identical body that we had when we’re here. And the other, we have a body that is completely unrelated to the body that we have now.

All right with that in mind let’s look now at Paul’s explanation and exposition and first of all he illustrates from the natural world. And I’m going to begin, of course, because we really have considered 35, 36, or rather with first 37 where the answer to that second question comes. And he says verse 37.

“And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.”

Now, you can see that Paul in seeking to answer the question of what kind of body do we have, launches into an illustration. He feels that in God’s creation we have illustrations of most of the great truths of the word of God. And in the sowing of the seed

of grain in the ground, we have a process which illustrates the resurrection body. We take a little seed. We place it in the ground and then the seed germinates. And up from the seed there rises a plant. It may be a barely, it may be of wheat, or it may be of some other grain. But in that we have an illustration of a feature of the resurrection body. And Paul says “God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.”

Now, the first thing that we notice from this is that there is continuity between this body and the resurrection body. When our bodies are placed in the grave and then on the resurrection they are caught up in resurrection, it is the same body. That is, there is continuity. It’s not identical but it is the same body. It’s not your body and it’s not your body is for you and my body is for me. Your body is not for me mine is not for you. There is continuity as he says “And to every seed his own body.” There is continuity and there is also identity as you can see “To every seed his own body.” His own body.

Now, someone will say do you mean to say we are all going to look alike. No Paul goes to point out that there is diversity. Notice verse 39. “All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.” Again he’s illustrating. “There are also celestial bodies and bodies terrestrial.” In other words, we can look at heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies but “but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.” These things differ he says in God’s creation. “There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon.” There is the space program in the Pauline Epistle. “And another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.”

Now, what Paul has done then is to point out that our bodies are just like the seed is to the flower and further he has gone on to illustrate the fact that they are diverse just as diverse as stars are from stars, as moon is from the sun, and as the flesh of beasts and the flesh of fishes and the flesh of birds or the flesh of birds differ from one another. So what he has then done is to turn to nature itself to give us an illustration showing us that there is continuity, there is identity and there is also diversity.

Now, it is only natural that in the light of these things we should be somewhat puzzled. One of the reasons that we are puzzled is that we are men and we are not God. Objections have been raised to this because they say “How is it possible for God to raise our bodies from the grave?” After all, if there is any form of identity at all, how can God do it for what happens when a man dies? Well, his body is placed in a tomb and there that body corrupts.

Now, ultimately, that body turns to dust and ultimately in the decay and corruption of things, the body becoming dust is caught up in the general decay of things and soon the body, the particles that are left, become the food of plants and plants grow up and become the food of people and people eat the produce of the plants and pretty soon particles have formed the bodies of men who have passed before become particles in the bodies of men who are living and this process goes on and on and on again. That’s what it does. I’m sorry to say but that is precisely what it does and we have tried to arrest the process a little by putting our bodies in waterproof lead lined vaults, etc. or so the funeral parlors tell us, but we have not been able to escape the fact that this process of mingling of particles has gone on and really we are all part of one another.

So when is the resurrection going to be? Well, it’s going to be a great gathering of dust from all over the world. It’s going to be a tremendous picture of flying dust particles who fly from all parts of the world across one another so that, ultimately, in order for us to have our own bodies if we can ever decide to whom a particle really belongs in the final analysis. Now this is the kind of thing we are going to have in the resurrection. And of course, it becomes stupid and foolish and ridiculous and silly. And it’s silly, all because we have proceeded upon the false assumption that we’re going to have the same particles in our bodies that we had when we were here upon the earth.

Roger Williams was a great spiritual man in the early days of the United States, as you know he was very prominent in Rhode Island. All Baptists love Roger Williams because he was really the founder of the Baptist movement in the United States. And

Roger Williams died and after he had been dead for some time some member of his family wished to exhume his body, give him a better burial, and put a marker above his grave. And they went to the place where he had been buried, and they were surprised and shocked to discover that the place where he had been placed was in a little tomb, which had broken open, and an apple tree had grown up right by it. And the apple tree had actually grown up out of the skull of the remains of Roger Williams. The roots had gone right, this is gory tonight isn't it? [Laughter] The roots had gone right down the spine of Roger Williams and literally his body, the remains of it, had been taken up into that apple tree. And everybody who ate an apple off of that tree was sick for weeks afterwards.

Now, I really don't know that. I made up that part of it. [Laughter]

But really seriously that is what happened. And, of course, this is what has happened over and over and over again but we should not be disturbed by that. We should not think that there is not going to be a resurrection because God is unable to find the particles or unable to tell to whom the particles belong in the first place because the resurrection is not going to be like that. Of course, if God had to do it, he could do it but the resurrection is not going to be like that. As a matter of fact, there is no need whatsoever to have the same particles because as we shall see the body that we shall have is a spiritual body. There is continuity, but there is diversity, and there is not the sameness of the particles.

If, for example, we could think of a brick house or let us just suppose this church building. Now, we can really change this church building completely so far as particles are concerned and we would still have the same building. Let's suppose that one day each day of this year we should change one brick in this building. We should take out one brick and we should put another brick in and we should be constantly doing that. Well, we would still have the same building. It would not be composed of the identical

materials but it would be the same building. It would have the same form the same structure the same shape and that is really what takes place in the human body.

Now, I am not a physiologist but I understand that physiologists have said that the human body actually undergoes a transformation so that I say in one writer he said every seven years and someone else said every three and a half years. The time, well it’s immaterial as far as I’m concerned, but the facts are that you yourself are changing everyday physiologically. And seven years from now you will not be the same person not a single particle in your body will be the same but you will be the same. And you will look the same. You will look a little older but look at the same and I will be able to recognize you and you will probably be able to recognize me, because you see the form the shape the structure the color is all the same. So it is possible for an identity and a sameness as we see it to exist even though there is a complete transformation of the particles for the materials. And that, I think, is the way that we are to understand the resurrection of the body. We are to understand that God in his own great power takes that which was our natural body, which has decayed which has corrupted, and he brings forth in his mighty power a resurrection body which we can say is our own body. It is not somebody else’s body. It is a continuity from the natural body which was placed in the grave, but it is also diverse from all other bodies. And it is like Jesus Christ’s body in its capacities and its qualities.

So we should not be worried then about the flying dust particles at the resurrection time. There is not going to be that so far as I know. People often ask me shall we recognize our loved ones when we get to heaven. The best answer that was ever given to that was the answer that George MacDonald gave. When someone asked him are we going to be able to recognize our loved ones in paradise? He said “I am sure we will not be bigger fools then than we are now.” Of course, we should be able to recognize our loved ones. So Paul’s illustrations then stress these three things: continuity, identity, and diversity.

Now, secondly, the application to the resurrection body verse 42 through verse 44 and if you’re a careful Bible student now. And I hope you’re becoming careful Bible student. The clue to the understanding of what Paul is saying is found in the first two words of verse 42. He’s given us these illustrations of grain, these illustration of one kind of flesh of men, beasts, fishes, birds, celestial bodies, terrestrial bodies, sun, moon, stars all of these things to illustrate the resurrection body. And he says verse 42 “So also.” “So also is the resurrection of the dead.” In other words, what I’ve been giving to you is illustration, now application. “So also is the resurrection of the body.”

Now, Paul tells us something about that body. He has told us its continuity, it’s identity, it’s diversity, but he hasn’t described it. Now, he is going to center his attention upon a further description of the body of the resurrection. And I’m interested to know what my resurrection body is going to be like. So I’m interested in these verses. Paul says first of all. By the way he says, I think, seven things about this body in the verses through verse 49 and then in verses 50 through 53, he adds a point or two, seven in all.

The first thing that he says is the old body is sown in corruption. The new is raised in incorruption. So the first thing that he says about the resurrection body is that it is a body of incorruption. It is sown in corruption. Corruption speaks of decay and our bodies decay. I’ve already said that. So I’m not going to belabor it further. We are sown in corruption. We decay but the resurrection body shall be raised in incorruption.

Now, do you know what that means? It means that throughout all eternity we shall not decay. There shall be no corruption. Our bodies are incorrupt, incorruptible.

Now, the second thing, he says the old body is sown in dishonor. Now, I think that word has reference to our sins. It is sown in dishonor. It is raised in glory. That means in the resurrection body it shall not be infected with the sin principle. There should be no sin dwelling in our members that Paul says in Romans 7 about the present body. We’re not going to have a body in which sin dwells. That means we’re not going

to be tempted to sin in heaven. We’re going to be impeccable in heaven. We cannot sin in heaven. Now, isn’t that going to be good?

By the way, that word I need to spell it for you. I’m dancing up here. I’m just trying to get out of the way of this board. Impeccable. Remember the word sinless is not the same as impeccable. Sinless merely says there is no sin in my body but I could be sinless now and sinful in a moment. So sinless is not as strong as impeccable. For impeccable says I cannot sin. Now, Jesus Christ was not only sinless but he was impeccable. He could not sin. He was temptable, for remember temptability depends upon the constitutional susceptibility of human nature and Jesus possessed human nature. But he was as strong in the resisting of temptation as his strongest nature and his strongest nature was divine nature and because he was divine he was temptable and impeccable. Now, we are temptable and we are sinful for we have yielded to temptation but the time is coming when we enter into heaven with our resurrection bodies that we shall not only be sinless but we shall be impeccable. And so far as I know we shall no longer be tempted any longer. So it is sown dishonor. It is raised in glory.

Third, it is sown in weakness. I would think that has to do with fatigue.

Now, there is nothing wrong in being tired. Jesus himself because he possessed human nature was tired. He was tired in the story in the 4th chapter of John and sat down on the well. That pertains to human nature. Now, he says it is sown in weakness. Our body is subject to fatigue, it is raised in power. That’s the third thing that is true of the resurrection body. It is incorruptible. It is glorious. It has no dishonor. It is impeccable. It is powerful. And then he says, fourthly, “It is sown a natural body. It is raised a spiritual body.”

Now, natural is the word soulish. Many years ago when I first began to teach the Bible and the word soulish is found in several places in the New Testament, for example, in 1 Corinthians chapter 2 in verse 14 “for the natural man, the soulish man, the natural man, the unsaved man.” “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God:

for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” A great text very important it tells us that a man who has never been born again cannot understand the Bible that’s why it’s all foolishness to him. And then there is a text in Jude in which it is used verse 19 “These be they who separate themselves, sensual, natural, soulish, not having the spirit.” So the soulish man is the man who doesn’t have the spirit. He’s the man who is dominated by his soul. Now, it is translated natural here. So it is sown a natural body. Our body is a body that is so constructed that it is animated by our soul and thus it is a soulish body.

But Paul says “It shall be raised a spiritual body.” Now, he is not talking, I say, about substance. He’s talking about the use of a body. That is it is sown and in such a way that it is animated by the soul. It shall be raised in such a way that it is animated by the spirit. So we have a natural body now. In fact, since we have been born again, we have not only a natural body but we have a renewed spirit within. We are something of a contradiction those of us that are Christians, we have a natural body but we have a spirit that has been renewed within. We’re no longer as natural as we used to be. We used to be very natural and when we die and our spirit goes to be with the Lord as it is true with every Christian the moment we die our spirit goes to be with the Lord and somebody looks down at me and says he surely looks natural. He will really be telling the truth because I will never be so natural as when my spirit is gone and that body is still lying there. I will really be natural. Because you see the natural man is the man who is outside of Christ who is dominated by his soul who does not have the Holy Spirit. So I will not be pleased when you stand and look and say “He surely looks natural.” I might say that sound auction.

Now, Paul goes on he says in verse 46, I’m going to skip for just a moment to verse 46 and 47 “Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven.” Now, you can see that Paul says that the first man, Adam he is

speaking about and we are all sons of Adam, is earthly but the second man is the Lord from heaven from which we assume that we too are going to have a heavenly body. So that Paul is telling us here that while our first body is an earthly body the resurrection body shall be a heavenly body.

I was listening to a tape of Donald Grey Barnhouse, and he was talking about this a few weeks ago. And on his tape he said some words like this. He said “The body dissolves and goes back to its primal elements, dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return. That happened to both Cain and Abel to the saved and the lost. The body is a corrupt decaying dying thing. Anthropologists have discovered twenty-seven different ways men do away with their bodies.

In Bombay, India, a famous arena is found in which bodies are placed on marbled slabs and birds of the air come and in a few hours devour the bodies. In some cases, bodies are burned.” He said “If you would go to the Ganges River where he had often been there bodies are put on funeral pyres and burned and then their ashes are scattered over the Ganges River.” And he said “The American Indians used to wrap them up in birch bark and put them in the tops of the trees. Our American method of burying them in cemeteries so that when the resurrection comes we would be standing facing the east comes from medieval Roman Catholicism and has nothing to do with the Bible. When I die you can bury me with me head facing north, east, south or west. You can do like the Aztecs. You can wrap me around with wires and drop me in a hole like post. Or you could do like the Pitzo Indians of Peru.

You could tuck me knees up under my chin. Put wires around me and drop me in a square hole. It makes no difference. You can pump my body full of embalming fluid and put me in, there it is, a waterproof lead-lined vault and I’m running out Dr. Barnhouse could say this like no one else could it a waterproof lead lined vault [Laughter] which is the undertaker’s advertisement and it’s death just the same.” And then he went on to say that “As far as he was concerned our American ways of burying and having

funerals are mostly pagan.” And with that I largely agree. Paul says “Our body is earthly, but the resurrection body shall be heavenly. Dust thou art unto dust thou shalt return.” Not only does Paul say this but remember God said it in the Garden of Eden to Adam. “Dust thou art.” That’s all you are just a little bit of dirt and you shall return to that. If Jesus Christ does not come while you’re alive.

Now, sixthly he says verse 53 “For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” So this body is mortal. Do you know what mortal means? Well, it means that it is destined to die. There is destined to be the separation between the physical and the spiritual and that is death but the body that we shall have shall be immortal. It shall never die. And finally Paul says in verse 50 “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.” And so this body is flesh and blood but Paul when he says what we’re going to be in the kingdom of God, he leaves a great big blank in that verse you will notice and so we just have to say question mark. “Flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” And you know if Paul had been writing this and I’d been standing by I would have said “Paul, Paul tell us what shall.”

But he didn’t. You know why? Well just at the things that he has told about the resurrection body. He has satisfied all of your curiosity. Look what he has said. He said the resurrection body is incorruptible. He says it’s glorious. He says it’s powerful. He says it is spiritual. He says it is heavenly. He says it is immortal. And then in the seventh he just leaves it blank. He says it’s not flesh and blood. Now, has he really told us what it’s like? No, he’s given us a lot of things that describe aspects of it and its characteristics of it but he’s not really told us what it’s like.

If we want the truest picture of what the resurrection body is, of course, we should go to our Lord’s own body. Why do you think Paul has not told us what kind of body we rise with? Specifically. Oh he’s told us all of these things. He thinks he’s answered this question with what body do they come? Well, they come with an

incorruptible. They come with a glorious body. They come with a powerful body. They come with a spiritual body. They come with a heavenly body. They come with an immortal. They come with a question mark body not flesh and blood.

Well, the reason is very simple. You couldn’t understand if he told you. There is no possible way for Paul to describe the resurrection body if he knew so that you and I could understand. No possible way, just no way to do it. You are just too ignorant. That’s right. You are just too ignorant. You do not have the capacity for understanding things that have to do with heaven. Just as you or I cannot understand things about China because we have never been there, so we cannot understand things about heaven because we have never been there. And so Paul has only told us things that give us characteristics of that body. He has not really described it for us.

Now, finally the confirmation of Scripture and Paul as it is custom he likes to turn to the Bible. And so he says in verse 45 “And so it is written.” That is the Scriptures agree with what I’m telling you about. The first man Adam was made a living soul. In other words, Adam was a living soul. God breathed into him the breath of life and man became a living soul Genesis 2:7 says. But Jesus Christ is a life-giving spirit. Adam the first is a living soul. He possessed a natural body, a body that was dominated by the soul. But Adam the last, Jesus Christ, is a life-giving spirit. He possesses a body that is animated by the Spirit. Thus there must be a resurrection body, and there must be a body that is like our Lord’s body. Paul continues verse 46 “Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy.” That is, he’s of the dust, dusty. “The second man is the Lord from heaven.” As is the dust one or dusty ones so are they also ever dusty. As is the heavenly such are they also such that are heavenly. “And as we have borne the image of the dusty, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.”

So that’s what Paul says about the resurrection body. How could we illustrate it? Well I don’t know. I think that if we were to look for an illustration of the resurrection

body perhaps we could think of moonlights streaming through a window or sunlight through a window. Have you ever noticed in a dark room when you open the blinds and the sun is shining outside that you can actually see the light particles? And, of course, you can see them, you can put your hand in them, but you cannot feel them. It is transparent but yet it is visible. Apparently, our Lord’s body was the body something like that in that he was able to go through doors. Remember in John chapter 20 verse 19 and verse 26, in the appearance of our Lord to the disciples John comments upon this fact and comments upon it twice. He says “When the disciples were gathered together the doors being shut Jesus came into the midst. Twice” he says “the doors were shut but Jesus came.” There was some kind of arrangement of whatever makes up the resurrection body that enabled the resurrection body to pass right through our material structure. Of course, a scientist would tell you if we could rearrange the particles in a certain way we could anybody through another body today but we cannot do that. It is theoretically possible.

So in moonlight or in sunlight perhaps we have a simple pointer to what the resurrection body may be like. It’s a body of light. That seems to characterize the body of our Lord, the body of light. We know that Jesus on the mount transfiguration when he was transfigured Luke says “He became different.” That’s the exact expression Luke uses. He became different. That’s the only we you could describe it. It’s different the resurrection body and so that is about as far as we can go. We know that we shall have a resurrection body. It shall incorruptible, glorious, powerful, spiritual, heavenly, immortal, but it is different from anything that we have ever seen or that we shall see until we experience the resurrection. It shall be a glorious body and I’m looking forward to having mine.

Do you know there is a nice little story with which I’m going to conclude our study tonight? About two octogenarians who were talking and a friend was walking along with them and as they parted for the night one of the old men said to the other one “Well goodnight I’ll see you when I’m thirty-three.” And the friend interrupted and said “What

in the world do you mean? Both of you are over eighty and I know you are eighty-four.” He said “Well our Lord said that we were going to be like him and he was thirty-three when he died. So I’ll see you when I’m thirty-three.” Well there is more to it than that and we’re going to conclude our study next Monday night when we discuss the moral side, discuss the when of glorification and the certainty of it and that will conclude, by the way, our series of studies of systematic theology for this year. So next Monday night will be our last time for a little while. It is possible that during the month of June, I may during part of June and part of July before I go off on vacation to North Carolina and relax in my hammock for a few weeks. It is possible we may have a few studies then but this will conclude our studies next Monday night, last time.

Let’s close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for this wonderful truth of the resurrection body. And we thank Thee that we should have a body like unto his own glorious body. And Lord while we cannot hope to understand all that the Bible has to say on all these points, we thank Thee that thou hast given us enough to give us a living vital hope. And we look forward to the day when Jesus Christ shall come. And we shall be resurrected and we shall be like him. We pray that this hope may so move us that thou canst use us in a better and a deeper with our friends and all with whom we may come into contact.

In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.