

OpenTheo

1 Corinthians 15:1-16:24



1 Corinthians - Steve Gregg

In this comprehensive discussion on 1 Corinthians 15:1-16:24, Steve Gregg examines the significance of Christ's resurrection and the hope of the resurrection of all believers. The passage covers a range of topics, including the post-resurrection appearances of Christ, the defeat of death, eschatology, and the transformation of the physical body into a spiritual one. Gregg also offers insights on the contentious interpretation of verse 29 and emphasizes the importance of practical assistance and unity between Jewish and Gentile believers. The discussion concludes with a call to remain steadfast in faith and a warning against those who do not love the Lord.

Transcript

All right, we're turning to chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians, and we'd like to take chapter 15 and chapter 16 so we can finish the book. That sounds like a lot of material to take in one session. However, chapter 16 is kind of miscellaneous subjects that do not require much exposition.

I will not leave them unexamined. address, but they won't be very time consuming. Chapter 15, on the other hand, is a very long chapter, but it concerns one subject only, which means we don't have to develop more than one topic here, and it may be that we can meet our goal of getting through both these chapters in a session without doing too much disservice to either.

Now, Chapter 15 then has the last subject, a major subject, which Paul wishes to address to the Corinthians. It is clear that Paul was aware of some people in the church who said there was no resurrection from the dead. We get this from verse 12 of Chapter 15, Now if Christ is preached that he's been raised from the dead, which was of course a given, and he establishes that in the first 11 verses, which we'll read.

It says, How do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? Now, he would hardly make that statement unless there were some among them who were saying just that. Now, they were not apparently denying Jesus' resurrection from the dead, because he establishes that all of them have come to faith in Christ by believing a

gospel that included a reference to, and as a central part of it, the fact that Jesus rose from the dead. This is not what was being challenged in the Corinthian church.

When they were saying there is no resurrection from the dead, they were not considering Christ's resurrection, because Paul basically spends the first 11 verses to prove that belief in Christ's resurrection, which he assumed they would agree with, basically is the underlying reason for believing in our own resurrection, which he figured some of them did not believe in. Now, I'm not sure why they would believe in Christ's resurrection, but not in ours. I can understand why Greeks would have trouble believing in any resurrection, and I've told you in times past why that would be.

We know that the Greeks did not feel that there was any value in the material, the physical realm, and that the physical body was nothing but a hindrance to the pure spiritual nature of man which is trapped inside. The Greeks spoke of the human body as a prison, and they felt that death was a release of the pure spiritual side of man from the prison of this physical body. Now, you might say, well, Paul sort of talks that way too, doesn't he, when he talks about in Romans 7, who shall deliver me from this body of death? Well, no, he doesn't say the same thing.

He wants to be delivered from the fallen body, but he's looking forward to, according to Romans chapter 8, the redemption of the body, which is the glorification of our body at the time that Christ returns. That which makes the body problematic to us, of course, is that sin is in our members, but when we are glorified at the coming of Christ, we will still have a body. We will have an immortal body, as Paul teaches in this chapter, one that is glorious and powerful and not subject any longer to death or any of the things that make life in this body difficult.

But, you see, the Greeks were objecting to this body on other bases, not just that there was a flesh with sin in it, but it was physical. Just anything physical in Greek thought was considered to be evil. And therefore, since the resurrection body would be also physical, even though Paul taught that the new body would not be subject to the sin and so forth that the present body is, that was not consolation enough for them.

The fact that the resurrection body would be a body, would be a physical thing, was enough to discredit the doctrine in the eyes of many Greeks. We know this, for example, from seeing Paul's sermon on Mars Hill in Acts chapter 17. He was teaching these idolaters about God, the true God who made everything, and he was pointing out that God is not made of stone or wood, and he's a spirit being.

All up to that point, the Greeks were not offended, although he certainly was presenting views of God that they had never heard before. But when he came to the point where he said that God had raised Jesus from the dead, the Bible says when they heard that, they began to mock him. Apparently that was the end of his message.

They wouldn't listen anymore. I guess the crowd, he lost their attention and their respect by making reference to Jesus rising from the dead, because these Greeks could not see any wisdom or desirable thing about having a physical body raised immortal. If the goal of Greek philosophy was to eventually be free from the physical body, why would God re-entrap, as it were, the spirit of man in a physical body for all eternity? I have no doubt that that is one of the things that made the doctrine of the resurrection objectionable to certain people in Corinth, even in the Corinthian church.

They were of a Greek background. Just as in an American culture where we've been taught that the pursuit of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are divine rights, and our culture has driven this into our head, if the Christian message teaches us that we must deny ourselves and give up our rights and so forth, this goes against our culture, and you'll find some Christians who do not receive that very well. It's a clearly taught scriptural concept, but it goes against our cultural upbringing so much that many people simply do not think about it or accept it, or they reinterpret it or something.

I have no doubt that the Greeks in Corinth, some of them, found equally offensive to their cultural background the idea of a resurrection of the body. So we know that 1 Corinthians 15 was written because there were some in the church that were denying the resurrection of the body, but apparently not denying the resurrection of Christ, as he points out in the opening verses. Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you, unless you believe in vain.

For I delivered to you, first of all, that which I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that he was buried and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures, and that he was seen by Cephas, that is Peter, and by the twelve. After that he was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that he was seen by James and then by all the apostles.

Then last of all he was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles and am not worthy to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believe. Now he's just telling them things they already know here. He does not expect to find any opposition yet at this point.

He's going to begin talking about the resurrection of our bodies beginning at verse 12. But he's saying in these verses, you know, the gospel that you already received, he points out in verse 1, there is a gospel which Paul preached to them which they received.

They had no objection to it apparently.

Also in verse 11 he says, so we preach and so you believe. So he's pointing out to them, you know, this is not some new thing in addition to what you already accepted I'm asking you. You already have believed a message that I preached to you.

What was that message? Well, he says in verse 3, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures and that he was buried and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures. Now we could take the time, if we had it, to look at what scriptures he has in mind when he says that Jesus died for our sins according to the scriptures. That he was buried and rose again the third day according to the scriptures.

Obviously the scriptures he has in mind are the Old Testament scriptures. And what he means is that what happened to Christ and what Paul preaches as having happened to Christ, it was not something that Paul made up or even could have made up because such ideas predated Paul by a great time. They were also found in the Old Testament scriptures.

And what Christ did in dying and resurrecting actually was quite consonant with what the Jews could have expected had they understood their scriptures better. As far as scriptures referring to Christ's death, there are some that we know in the Old Testament. Some are direct statements.

Some of them we could even think of as types. For example, that Jesus died and rose on the third day. You don't have any direct statement in the Old Testament that Jesus will rise on the third day.

However, you do have the story of Jonah. And Jesus said, as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, making Jonah a type of himself. And Paul may well feel that the resurrection of Christ, as Jesus himself predicted on the third day, was foreshadowed in the Old Testament under the figure of Jonah himself.

And therefore, Jesus rising on the third day would be something that was according to the scriptures, not necessarily according to what the Jews understood the scriptures to mean. It's not as if the rabbis already knew before Jesus came that Jonah was somehow a picture of the Messiah. But he was, whether they knew it or not.

And therefore, Christ's resurrection on the third day was according to that which the scriptures anticipated by that mean. As far as scriptures about the Messiah dying, there are some. Again, some of them were perhaps not fully understood by the rabbis.

We have notably Psalm 22, which is about crucifixion, it would appear. From about verse 16 on, it talks about the rider speaks as if he is one who has had his hands and feet pierced, whose bones are out of joint. He is dying of thirst.

And the description taken together, including the fact that they cast lots from my garment and part my vesture and cast lots from my garment, or whatever it is he said. That passage certainly speaks of the death of Jesus, though that might not have been understood to be about Jesus prior to the fulfillment. Isaiah 53 certainly talks about the Messiah being rejected and slain.

He's cut off from the land of the living, according to Isaiah 53. And some of the Jews understood that to be about the Messiah. Though, of course, ever since the time of Christ, Jews have rejected the idea that that's about the Messiah because it looks too much like Jesus, and they don't want to accept Jesus as their Messiah.

So they say that Isaiah 53 is not talking about Jesus, it's talking about the nation of Israel personified, which of course can be debunked easily from the material in the chapter, but we won't take time for that now. Another scripture that speaks about the death of the Messiah is in Daniel chapter 9. In the prophecy about the 70 weeks, it mentions the Messiah will be cut off, which is a Hebraism for being put to death. The same expression was used in Isaiah 53 where it says he was cut off from the land of the living, obviously meaning he was put to death.

Well, Daniel 9 just uses the shorter phrase, he was cut off. The Messiah should be cut off. That's Daniel chapter 9 and verse 26.

After the 62 weeks, the Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself. So Paul was certainly within his rights when he said that Jesus' death was something that was according to the predictions of the scriptures. And even his resurrection was.

Even the third day was, if we take Jonah into consideration as a type. And there are some other scriptures less obvious that did speak about the resurrection of Christ. For example, Psalm 27 where the father speaks to Jesus and says, you are my son this day if I have begotten you.

We would not have known that to be about the resurrection, but Paul knew it was and he quotes it as such in Acts 13. In Acts 13, Paul quotes from Psalm 27 and says that that is about the resurrection of Christ. Also, both Peter and Paul quote the last verses of Psalm 16 where it says you will not leave my soul in shale, neither will you let your holy ones see corruption.

And both Peter on the day of Pentecost and Paul later on in Acts 13 quoted this Psalm as a reference to Christ rising from the dead. He wasn't left in shale, but in his body did not see corruption. That is, he was not subject to decay because he rose from the dead.

So there were scriptures, a number of them, that could be and were in the New Testament pointed to in the Old Testament as reflecting on the death of the Messiah and also his resurrection. So Paul says we preached you this message and while it was new

to you, it wasn't at all new in the sense that God had previously told the Jews that Jesus the Messiah would do this, and you received it, you received that gospel and you stand in that now. And he says in verse 2, this is the gospel in fact by which you are saved if you hold fast to it.

The implication being if you begin to slip from this message and change it or reject it in any sense, then maybe it won't save you. But you are saved by it if you hold fast to that which I preached to you. Now, in verse 4, Paul says that you are saved by it.

Now, in verse 5, he begins to list some of the post-resurrection appearances of Christ to establish the fact of the resurrection. Not only was this according to scriptures, but according to many witnesses. The list that he gives here is different from the lists in all four gospels.

All four gospels give us some kind of account of post-resurrection appearances of Christ, but none of them give quite this same list. As it turns out, 1 Corinthians was written earlier than any of the gospels as far as we know. And therefore, this list of post-resurrection appearances of Christ predates the lists or the accounts in the gospels.

And we have here the earliest testimony in writing of Jesus' resurrection and the appearances he made. The gospels were written later and gave different sightings, as it were. There is no contradiction, however.

All the lists are true. It's just that each writer gives a different sampling of the many appearances that Christ made after his resurrection. Some of these are not found in any of the gospels.

When it says he was seen by Cephas and then by the Twelve, he is certainly referring to that which Luke 24 tells us about, how when the two men on the road to Emmaus discovered that they had been with Jesus, they ran back to Jerusalem to the Twelve. And upon arriving there, the disciples told these two men, the Lord has risen indeed and he has appeared to Peter. Now, we don't actually have any gospel telling the details of his appearance to Peter, but the two men who had met Jesus on the road to Emmaus were informed when they got back to Jerusalem that Sunday, the day that Jesus had risen, that Peter had in fact appeared to Peter.

Now, we know from the gospels that before he appeared to Peter, he appeared to Mary Magdalene and to a group of women. Paul doesn't mention that, but that doesn't mean he didn't know about it or that he was trying to obscure it. He is simply giving some of the significant testimony.

In some cultures, the Jewish for example, the testimony of women was inadmissible in court. And it's possible that Paul didn't feel like it would be bolstering his case in the eyes of his readers to cite women as witnesses if there was any prejudice against them

as witnesses, so he skips over those and tells about how Peter saw him and then the 12, the same night of the resurrection. We have that in Luke 24 and John 20.

Verse 6 says, After that he was seen by over 500 brethren at once. We don't have any record of this in the gospels, although we do have Jesus meeting with his disciples in Matthew 28 on some mountain in Galilee, we're told. In fact, the closing verses of Matthew 28 were uttered on a mountain in Galilee, not on the Mount of Olives where Jesus ascended from.

He ascended from the Mount of Olives in Judea. Matthew doesn't tell about that, but Matthew closes with a meeting that Jesus had with some disciples in Galilee, and many have felt like that was the occasion when he appeared to up to 500. I mean, Jesus didn't have probably 500 followers in Judea, but since he had preached for over a year in Galilee and had thousands following him sometime, it's possible that after his resurrection he appeared to a large gathered group of people who had formerly believed in him in that region.

We don't know, but Paul makes the point in verse 6 that of these 500, the greater part remain to the present, although a few, just to be precise, have died. Some of them have died, but some were still alive, and Paul makes the point as if to say, if you have any serious doubts about it, there's many living witnesses who could be consulted. Verse 7, After that he was seen by James, now that too is an appearance that is not recorded in any of the Gospels, but James is the brother of Jesus, the oldest brother of Jesus.

We know that John 7 tells us that during Jesus' earthly ministry his brother didn't believe in him. However, James later became a prominent leader in the church. He is seen to be the apparent leader at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15.

He is in charge, as it appears, of the church in Jerusalem when Paul goes there in his final visit in Acts 21, and he wrote the book of James. So we read of him in the Gospels being an unbeliever, and then we read in the epistle of James and the book of Acts of James being a believer and a leader in the church. Only here do we find out what changed his status from an unbeliever to a believer.

He received a special visit from Jesus after the resurrection. Verse 8, Last of all he was seen by me. Now, of course, Paul is skipping over quite a few of them, but it's quite clear that Paul didn't see Jesus until after the ascension.

All the other appearances of Jesus, both the ones he's referred to and the ones he has left out, all occurred before the ascension. Only Paul had seen Jesus after the ascension, primarily. Now, of course, Peter, it's hard to know how many of the apostles might have had occasional visions of Jesus, but that's another story.

He's talking about a resurrection appearance, which of course led to his conviction that

Jesus had risen. Now, in having mentioned himself, he wants to make it clear that he's not really worthy to be numbered with the rest of the people, because after all, during the entire time of Jesus' stay on earth, Paul was an unbeliever. He was born late, as it were, after Jesus was gone, and the Johnnie come lately and he hardly feels worthy to be included with the other apostles.

But he said nonetheless he had received grace, verse 10, and the grace was not poorly invested. In fact, he used it, he walked in it, through grace he labored and ended up laboring more than all the other apostles. But he doesn't want them to, he's not trying to take some kind of ego credit, he says, however, it's not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

It was through the grace of God that he managed to do more than the rest of the apostles. Verse 11, therefore, says, therefore whether it was I or they, that is, whoever you may have heard the gospel from, whether it was me or one of these others, Cephas or someone else, certainly whoever preached the gospel to you included the fact of the resurrection of Christ. That's what he's pointing out.

Now, he may have had to say it this way because there were some in Corinth saying, I'm of Paul, but there were others who were not. They were saying, I'm of Cephas, I'm of Apollos, or whatever. And so Paul wanted to make it clear that it's not just the band that are describing themselves in terms of loyalty to Paul who have to accept his gospel that Jesus rose from the dead.

Whoever preaches the gospel preaches that Jesus rose from the dead. Whether you heard it from me or someone else makes no difference. The gospel always has this element in it that Jesus rose from the dead.

Without that, you don't have the good news. And so in verse 11 it says, whether it was they or I, that's what we preach and that's what you believed. Now, having reminded them of that, he has the first premise of his argument.

Namely, all of you believe or at least have one time or another acknowledged, as if you did believe, that Jesus rose from the dead. If you had not accepted that, you would not have accepted any gospel that's currently preached and therefore would not be in the church. So he's reasoning with them as men that he feels like he's already got something that they will have to agree to because that's the whole point of being Christians.

The gospel they received was that Jesus rose from the dead. So in verse 12 he says, now if Christ is preached that he has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is vain and your faith is vain.

Yes, and we have found false witnesses of God because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ, whom he did not raise up, if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile and you're still in your sins.

Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. Now his argument is obvious here.

If we have accepted the fact that Christ rose from the dead, we cannot in principle object to the concept of God raising the dead. We have said and we have accepted the fact that God has raised the dead at least once in the case of Christ. Therefore, one can hardly raise an objection in principle to the idea of God raising dead bodies.

Now Paul is going to go on later in the chapter to say Christ's resurrection was in fact the first fruits of a general harvest. Christ's the first fruits, we're going to be harvested in terms of being resurrected also later on when he comes. But at this point he is not even focusing directly on our resurrection, but just on the concept of resurrection as a concept that Greek thinkers found objectionable.

And while Paul fully understood that Greeks found it objectionable, he did not expect Christians to find it objectionable, since they obviously believe that God raised Christ from the dead. He says if Christ isn't risen, then you've believed a false message, your faith is futile. That is to say you believe something that's not true.

If God doesn't raise the dead, then he didn't raise Christ from the dead. And he says then we've got some other serious problems. If that's the case, verse 18 says, then those who have fallen asleep, or those who have died in Christ have perished.

They're gone. There's no future for them. Which can't be true.

Certainly Jesus said that those who suffer belief in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. But these people are dead, so they have perished, if they're not going to have a life later in the resurrection. And this only, he says, excuse me, verse 19, if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most pitiable.

Now that's an interesting thought, because I've often thought that even if there were no heaven or hell, I'd still kind of like being a Christian. Not to say it doesn't cramp my style, it certainly does. I mean anyone who is going to live holy life is going to experience some opposition from the world, is going to experience a fair amount of temptation that has to be resisted and so forth.

It would be easier, of course, in some ways just to yield and go with the flow, float downstream with the rest of the world until it hits its waterfall and goes into hell. But if there was no hell, if there was no waterfall, if there was just the river, that would be

perhaps an attractive life. You wouldn't have to resist temptation, you could do anything you had an urge to do.

On the other hand, even though it would be easier in some ways to be a non-Christian, having been a Christian, I know the consolations of it. I mean, even if God had never promised heaven or hell to me, and there was no expectation of it, yet if I had his presence in my life, if I had the comfort of the Holy Spirit, and if I had his strength given to me and so forth, all the things we have prior to going to heaven, but no heaven, I've always thought it would be worthwhile to be a Christian anyway, just to know God, and just to have a strength beyond myself to face life. I mean, I look at non-believers, and it's not only the fact that they're going to hell that makes me pity them.

I don't know how they can live in their ignorance and face the world as it is. If I did not believe in heaven or hell, I'd still pity, I'd tend to pity, I think, people who don't know the Lord. So I pity them more knowing they are going to hell.

Now the interesting thing is that Paul has, it seems like an opposite attitude from what I did. He makes it sound like if there was no resurrection, hey, this isn't worth it. This life is just not worth it.

But of course, Paul's attitude is different than mine because his circumstances were quite different than mine. Paul received 39 lashes five times with a cat-of-nine-tails. He was beaten with rods three times.

He was shipwrecked a number of times. He was hated and in danger everywhere he went. He didn't live anything like the tranquil Christian life that most of us have known.

And therefore, I could understand him saying, listen, if this is the only life I've got, I'm sure wasting it in all this misery. Not that there isn't comfort from God. In 2 Corinthians 1, he points out that God does comfort us in all our afflictions.

But still, if I weren't a Christian, I wouldn't have all these afflictions and wouldn't need the comfort. The point is that in times when Christians are persecuted, I think they can relate far better than we can to Paul saying, if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most pitiable. If we waste our life preaching a gospel that has no reward after this life, but also has no reward in this life, in the sense that all we have is unrelieved suffering, we bite the bullet and resist temptation, we deny ourselves certain pleasures that other people do not deny themselves, and we get beat up and martyred and tortured for this, and then there's nothing after life.

Life's just a bummer and then you die. And that's it. Yeah, I'd say Christians are pretty stupid, making maybe a bad trade.

Certainly, if they were suffering as much as Paul did in this life, it would seem like a bad trade if there's no eternal life. Now, verse 20 says, but now Christ is risen from the dead.

Now, all that in verse 12 through 19 was, if Christ isn't risen from the dead, then these are the ramifications.

If God doesn't raise the dead, then Christ isn't risen from the dead. And if Christ isn't risen from the dead, then our message was empty. We lied to you.

You believe the gospel that isn't true. You're still in your sins. Your faith is empty.

You're just living a lie. Those who have died in Christ have perished if the dead don't rise, and Christ, therefore, would not be risen. However, he says in verse 20, Christ is risen, in fact, from the dead.

All those ifs in verses 12 through 19 are not the case. Those are ifs that are hypothetical merely, because Christ, in fact, is risen from the dead and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. Now, those who have fallen asleep were mentioned in verse 18, those who've died, the Christians.

Now, at this point, Paul, for the first time in the chapter, introduces the resurrection of Christians. He talks about Christ's resurrection, then he talks about the concept in general of God raising dead. Now he points out that the resurrection of Christ was not an isolated event, nor was it simply a proof that God, in principle, had no objection to raising dead bodies, but it was a guarantee of the resurrection of us, because that's what a firstfruits was of a harvest.

In the Jewish religion, at least, the Jews were required on the Feast of Firstfruits to take the first harvested grain and to wave it before the Lord as a symbol of the upcoming harvest, which would be some, actually, months off in some cases, but they would wave it as if to offer the whole crop to God. The firstfruits were representative of the whole crop and were the guarantee that there was going to, in fact, be a crop. The firstfruits were the first promise of a harvest, and although the harvest came some time later, the presence of firstfruits was the guarantee that a harvest was coming, and therefore Christ's resurrection is like that.

It's a firstfruits of a more general harvest, and we're the ones he's going to harvest when it comes. For since by man came death, by man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

But each one in his own order, Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at his coming, then comes the end when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when he puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death, for he has put all things under his feet.

That's a quote from Psalm 2. But when he says all things are put under him, it is evident that he who put all things under him is accepted. Now when all things are made subject

to him, then the Son himself will also be subject to him who put all things under him, that God may be all in all. Now here we have a very, it's a unique example with reference to Paul's understanding of eschatology.

When we think of eschatology, the things that are debated often are where does the millennium fit in, where does the rapture fit in, with reference to the tribulation, if there is a tribulation, when does the antichrist rise and that kind of stuff. Those are the issues that people debate about today. Interestingly Paul never gives a list of events like that.

You never find in the Bible that Paul gives a listing saying next comes the rapture, then comes tribulation, then comes the second coming, then comes the millennium, then comes the great white throne judgment. If we had a passage like that, that would confirm dispensationalism. On the other hand, if we had another kind of listing, it might confirm some other system.

What's interesting is we don't have any passage that tells us when the rapture occurs with reference to other things like millennium and tribulation and things like that. What we do, of course, in 1 Thessalonians 4, have reference to the rapture occurring in connection with the resurrection of the dead. Because Paul there, 1 Thessalonians 4, verses 16 and 17, he says, The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air, and thus shall we ever be with the Lord. So in that passage, 1 Thessalonians 4, verses 16 and 17, Paul says, When Jesus comes, the dead will rise and then the living will be caught up to meet him. So there is, in fact, a passage that, in speaking about the rapture, puts it in close connection with the resurrection of the dead, of the Christians.

Now, this passage does talk about the resurrection of the Christians. Paul doesn't, in this segment, speak about the rapture, though I believe he does later on, after about verse 50. Verse 51 and the following verses do talk about the rapture, but here he talks only about our resurrection, because this is apparently what was under dispute in Corinth.

Some were saying, Ah, this belief that we're going to be raised from the dead doesn't make sense. We don't accept it. And Paul's saying, Well, basically you've got to if you're going to be a Christian, because to be a Christian, you have to acknowledge that Jesus rose from the dead, and what you need to understand is that the resurrection of Christ was, in God's sight, firstfruits only.

And firstfruits are followed by a harvest. He has become the firstfruits of those who died. It explains how that those who are in Christ cannot help but rise, cannot help but come alive, just like those who are in Adam could not help but die.

In Adam all died, but in Christ all will be made alive. Adam's death affected everyone who was in Adam. Christ's resurrection affects all that are in Christ.

And as such, they cannot avoid rising from the dead, because the firstfruits is not really something separate from the harvest, but just the first part of it. The first part of the harvest has begun. The firstfruits have been raised.

The harvest is, as it were, already initiated, but there's a long gap between the firstfruits and the general harvest, and he says, even though all in Christ will be made alive, he says it'll be each in his own order. Now, verse 23 is where Paul gives an order of things, which is rare in any passage in the New Testament to really give an order of eschatological events, but Paul does here, and therefore we might want to pay close attention to what order he taught. Christ, the firstfruits, that's a reference to Christ already having raised from the dead.

He's the first to rise. Who comes next? Well, those who are Christ's that is coming. Now, you might say, but wait, Jesus wasn't the first person to rise from the dead.

In fact, even after Jesus rose from the dead, Paul indicates the next is going to be the second coming and when we rise, but the apostles and Acts raised a few people from the dead. What do we make of that? And even Jesus had his resurrection, some people came out of their graves at that time, Matthew 27 tells us. Well, I think we have to understand that the resurrection of Christ is something different than just dead persons coming alive again.

Lazarus and Jairus' daughter and the son of a widow woman of a city called Nain, all these people rose from the dead before Jesus did. Likewise, both Elijah and Elisha. In their times, saw or were instrumental in the raising of dead people.

Jesus was not the first dead man to come alive again, but in all cases prior to Jesus' resurrection, those who came alive had not been long dead and were simply reanimated. Their bodies, their spirits apparently just came back into their body. They came back into the world, but they came back as mortal as before.

The spirit came back into their body, but their bodies were still flesh, still mortal, still natural bodies. It's just that they got a new lease on life. We hear of modern cases of this from time to time too.

People who are killed in an accident, their bodies are hauled off to the hospital to be examined and declared officially dead, and many times they are, but in some cases, 20 minutes, sometimes even longer periods of time, after they've been dead, they come back alive. This would be quite a mistake for a resurrection in the sense that Jesus was resurrected, or that we will when he comes back, because when Jesus was resurrected, he didn't just come back in a natural body, he came back in a glorified body. Our bodies,

as Paul will say in a later part of this chapter, will also be glorified in resurrection.

They will not be just the same old body unchanged. So resurrection, as Paul is speaking of it, is something that not only means an extended life, but an extended life in a changed and glorified and immortal body. And while people prior to Christ did come back to life in a few cases, and even after Christ has been here, some have come to life in a few cases after dying, none of them except Christ up to this point have been in glorified bodies.

He's the first fruit, and the next in order to have such an experience will be us when he comes. Now, a word needs to be said about the reference to those who are Christ's and his coming in verse 23. The Distensional View holds that there are two resurrections, an earlier resurrection of just Christians at the rapture of the church prior to the tribulation, and a second resurrection of unbelievers, which will take place not only after the tribulation, but also after the millennium.

They believe there will be a tribulation of seven years, then a thousand years, and a millennium after Christ has come. They believe that the believers will be raised prior to the tribulation, and the unbelievers raised after the millennium, so there's a gap of a thousand and seven years between the resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous. I do not have time to survey all the damaging evidence against this view in the Bible.

Paul speaks contrary to it in the book of Acts. Jesus speaks contrary to it in the Gospel of John, both in chapters 5 and 6. We won't take the time, because we don't have it, to look at all the passages, but I will say this. The verse before us, that is verse 23, is sometimes thought to bolster the suggestion that there is a resurrection of only Christians.

You see, Jesus said in John 5, the hour is coming in which all who are in the grave shall hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good to everlasting life, those who have done evil to everlasting damnation, which is a general resurrection, an hour is coming when they're all going to come out. So Jesus taught a general resurrection, but he said, well here, however, Paul teaches a resurrection of just Christians, which suggests that the resurrection of non-Christians happens at another time later than this. Well, in answer to that, I have two things to say.

One, the fact that Paul here mentions only the resurrection of Christians, without mentioning the resurrection of non-Christians, doesn't mean that he did not expect for the resurrection of non-Christians to happen at the same time. It only means that he's addressing his audience who are Christians and concerned about when they will be resurrected. Those who are Christ, that's all of his intended audience, will rise when he comes, not sooner, not later.

Now, but will the non-Christians rise then too when Jesus comes? Well, Paul doesn't say,

because he's not writing for the interest of non-Christians. It's not in a range of his consideration, what happens to non-Christians. You can know what he thinks about that from other passages elsewhere, but it's not necessary for him to lay out every detail of what he believes every time the subject comes up.

He's writing to Christians who would be concerned about their own resurrection, but in another place, in Acts 24 and verse 15, Paul stated his views, giving a little more information about his understanding of the resurrection. Acts 24 and verse 15, when he's given his defense before the governor, Felix, explaining his views, he says, I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, and they themselves refer to the Jews, the Pharisees, who accused him, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. Now Paul believed in a resurrection, not two, a resurrection of the dead, which included the just and the unjust, for him to get that idea.

Well, Jesus said it in the verse I mentioned earlier in Matthew 5. So Paul agreed with Jesus, there will be one resurrection that would include the just and the unjust. So on this occasion, we simply mention those who are Christ's rising. He's not in any sense denying that non-Christians will next rise.

As a matter of fact, if Paul did believe there would be an additional resurrection after ours of the unbelievers, as the dispensationist teaches, he should have said so because his point in this very passage in 1 Corinthians 15 is to give the order of resurrection. Everyone's going to be made alive, each in his own order. Christ first, then us, that is coming, and he should have said, and then the unbelievers later on after the millennium, if that was his view, because his purpose in writing these verses is to give some kind of sequence of when and at what point each person's going to rise from the dead.

Paul knows of only two resurrections, that of Christ, which occurred first, and then that of us, which will of course also at the same time be the resurrection of the lost, but that's not an important point for him to make. So we see that Paul omits any additional resurrections after the resurrection of those who are Christ's, so any other resurrection we would assume takes place at the same time as the resurrection of Christians. Notice what comes after the resurrection of Christians.

Paul doesn't say, then comes the tribulation, which the dispensationists would say, he doesn't say, then comes the millennium, or after that comes the resurrection of the lost, when he says, those who are Christ that is coming, they're going to rise, and then comes the end. That's the end. Nothing else after that.

Now what he says with reference to the end here is intriguing, and it doesn't seem to have any parallels elsewhere in scripture to help us understand it better, so it raises questions without answering them all. He says, verse 24, then comes the end when he delivers the kingdom up to God, the Father, when he puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. And, you know, Jesus delivering the kingdom over to his Father

raises some questions.

Well, one thing it shows is that the kingdom is currently in Jesus' hand under his management, but whenever he's finished whatever he's supposed to do, he's going to give it back to his Father. The question this raises is, what's going to be the change at that point? For instance, if Jesus is reigning now over his kingdom, and once he's put all his enemies under his feet and he comes back, he now delivers it over to his Father, what's going to be different? What's the difference between being under Jesus and being under the Father? What will Jesus' own status be different? Because he's going to then put himself under the Father, he says. Is Jesus going to be demoted, or what's the deal here with Jesus? Paul does not explain.

He obviously knew something that he didn't explain in detail, but when Jesus returns, that will be the mark that he's put all authority under his feet. And the last enemy will have been defeated, and he'll deliver this completed package, this conquered earth, over to his Father, apparently forever. Now, Paul says that this will happen in verse 24, when he puts an end to all rule and authority and power, that is, other than his own.

For he must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet. This is a good scripture for the post-millennialists, of which I'm not one, but it's quite clear that Paul is saying that at the coming of Christ, it'll be when he has put all his enemies under his feet. The post-millennialist believes that all those enemies are going to be put under his feet the same way you and I have, through their conversion, prior to Jesus' coming.

I would say, however, that the passage doesn't necessitate that. He will put some of his enemies under his feet in that manner, that is, by converting them, which we are representative of that class, but the others will be put under his feet at the time of his coming, in the sense of judgment. Anyway, he says the last enemy that will be destroyed is death.

Now, the destruction of the enemy death is at the resurrection, and yet Paul says that will be the last enemy to be destroyed. What this tells us is that at the time Christ raises the dead, when death is destroyed, there will be no more enemies to beat, which raises serious challenges to the pre-millennial view, because the pre-millennial view says we'll be resurrected before the millennium. According to Paul, that would be the end of death.

That's the death of death, when we're raised from the dead. And yet, according to the pre-millennial view, there's another thousand years at the end of which there's another rebellion against God, more enemies to overcome. Now, maybe I'm not telling it right when I say that the resurrection is the defeat of that enemy death, which is the last enemy that he's going to defeat.

Well, look later on in 1 Corinthians 15, and we'll settle the question. It says in verse 54, so when this corruption is put on incorruption and this mortal has put on immortality,

then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where's your sting? O Hades, where's your victory? Quite obviously, if death is swallowed up in victory, that is the defeat of death, the last enemy.

When does that happen? When this corruption puts on incorruption, when we're resurrected. The resurrection is itself the defeat of the last enemy death. At that point, death is swallowed up in victory, is replaced by victory.

And so, since death is the last enemy to be destroyed, and since that destruction of that last enemy is, in fact, the resurrection of us, that means that after we're resurrected, there will be no more enemies for him to overcome. It's the last. That leaves out any possibility of a future millennium and rebellion at the end after that.

That places, of course, the resurrection at the end of history. And all that follows then is the new heavens and the new earth. Now, I hope I haven't lost those of you who are not as conversant in these eschatological concepts as some others are.

He says in verse 27, For he has put all things under his feet. This is a quote from Psalm 8, which is actually a statement about man. God has put all things under man's feet.

But when he says all things are put under him, see Jesus is the ultimate man, it is evident that he who put all things under him is accepted. That is, God put all things under his feet, but God didn't put himself under his feet. The one who assigns him this authority does not come under it himself.

The Father is still the head of Christ, as Paul says elsewhere a couple of chapters back in chapter 11. Now, when all things are made subject to him, verse 28 says, then the Son himself will also be subject to him who put all things under him, that God may be all in all. That's, again, a mysterious statement.

What will be different? Once Jesus has got everything subdued and he comes back and raises the dead, that's the second coming, then he delivers everything to the Father and he himself becomes subject to his Father. Well, actually, he's already subject to his Father in one sense, so he must become subject to his Father in another sense, nowhere explained. This we have to await the event to understand it, I think.

We don't have enough other information. We don't have any other information in the Bible on it. Therefore, we must wait until it happens to know exactly what it is that Paul understood here.

Verse 29, otherwise what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead? And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? I affirm by the boasting of you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily, which just means I face death on a daily basis. If in the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me if the dead do not rise? Let us

eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. Do not be deceived.

Evil company corrupts good habits. Awake to righteousness and do not sin, for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.

These last words in verses 33 and 34 seem to be a warning to the faithful Christians not to associate with those that are corrupting the gospel, apparently in the context, by denying the resurrection. That that will corrupt good manners, hanging out with people like that, and it's a sin for them to even tolerate that kind of behavior in the church, that kind of belief, and they need to wake up to that and do something about it. Now, verse 29, I think I mentioned in a previous session that commentators say that there are over 40 different interpretations of verse 29 that have been published by different commentators.

We can hardly then be dogmatic in suggesting which one we think to be correct, but I'll say this. There are two that strike me as possibilities. There are probably more than that, but there's two that I consider to be probable, you know, have the best claim at being the likely interpretation.

One is that Paul knew of people who were baptizing living people by proxy on behalf of people who have died. The Mormons understand it this way, and they practice that themselves. They have a practice of baptism for the dead where if they have relatives who have died without being baptized, the Mormons believe you have to be baptized to be saved.

Therefore, in order for their relatives to get saved, they are willing to be baptized in their place. Mormons also believe you have to repent and believe and be filled with the Holy Spirit as well as be baptized in water. Those four things in Mormonism are considered essential for salvation, and I'm not sure what they do about those who have died without repenting or believing or being filled with the Spirit.

I mean, maybe you can be baptized by proxy for them. I don't know that they believe you can repent by proxy for them. Maybe they figure at least we'll get the baptism obstacle out of the way and let God work out the rest.

But in answering the Mormon doctrine on this, many Christians, including Walter Martin, who is probably the premier cult buster in his lifetime, he believed that Paul was in fact referring to some people known to him who did this practice. They did actually baptize living people on behalf of people who had died. But Walter Martin says, but Paul doesn't approve of the practice.

He knows of it, but he does not endorse it. And by this means, Walter Martin seeks to deflate the argument of the Mormons that, you know, since Paul knew of this, we should do it. Walter Martin says, well, yeah, Paul did know about this kind of practice, but it

wasn't in the church.

Paul knew of some people out there, some cult, some mystery religion or something, that were having this kind of practice, but Paul only mentions it without endorsing it. And therefore, it does not translate into a norm for the church. Let me say, that is certainly true.

It doesn't. Even if Paul did know of such people doing it, it is nowhere described elsewhere as a practice to be practiced, and this would be the only verse that gives anything like direction on that. However, I even have a problem with that explanation.

One is that, why would Paul refer to the practices of some cult, practices which he himself did not agree with, and use those practices as an argument in favor of a true Christian doctrine, mainly the resurrection of the dead? And I think that is a very important point. Suppose I was trying to argue, for example, that blood is sacrosanct, and that is one of the reasons why the blood of Jesus is so important. You know, the life is in the blood, and I was making some kind of teaching about the significance of the blood of Christ, and of blood in general, and I'm pointing out, well, you know, the Jehovah's Witnesses, they won't even get transfusions of blood because of this.

Would that translate into an argument for a Christian doctrine? I don't agree with the Jehovah's Witnesses in their rejection of transfusions. I see nothing wrong with getting transfusions. Why would I cite some practice that they do, which I think is off-base, and try to use that as an argument for something that I think is valid and important? It seems like I could appeal to Christian practices for better effect.

I have my doubts that that interpretation of the passage is correct. I'll just tell you briefly what I believe the view may be that is better. Those who are baptized for the dead, what shall they do? What does it mean baptized for the dead? Does it mean living people being baptized by a proxy for dead people, or could it mean something else? The word for, in the Greek, is what commentators say is a weak preposition.

It just has a general meaning of with reference to, so that it could be translated, those who are baptized with reference to the dead. Who is the dead? I'd like to suggest to you that the dead is Jesus, if the dead do not rise, which is what Paul immediately says after it. He has already argued in verse 12 and following that if the dead do not rise, then Jesus did not rise.

If the dead do not rise, then Jesus is dead. And why would people be baptized with reference to Jesus if he's dead? Why would we be baptized with reference to a dead man? Now, by this understanding, Paul is referring to the actual practice of the church. We are all baptized in the name of Jesus.

We are all baptized with reference to Jesus. The whole point of our baptism suggests

burial and resurrection with Jesus. But if Jesus didn't rise, which is the case if the dead don't rise, then Jesus is dead.

And what's the point of our being baptized with reference to his example? Now, seen this way, he is in fact talking about the actual Christian practice that is taught throughout scripture, that people are baptized with reference to Christ, baptized in the name of Jesus. And they do so in order to hark back to the fact that they died with him, were buried with him, and rise with him. But if all of that is a myth, if he didn't rise, if the dead don't rise at all, then our being baptized into Jesus is nothing better than being baptized with reference to a dead man, to the dead.

Why would we do that? This would render Paul's argument to be basing an argument for a theological point on an actual correct practice of Christians. He'd be saying, you see, the very practice of baptism itself points in the direction of there being a resurrection. Or else why would we do it? And the other argument he gives is, why do I stand in jeopardy of error? Why do I live in danger? Why do I put my life at risk all the time if this is the only life we've got? Why would I wrestle with beasts at Ephesus? Now, we don't know of Paul ever actually fighting with wild beasts at Ephesus, verse 32.

We do know that he spent two or three years in Ephesus, and that ministry in Ephesus is passed over rather briefly in Acts chapter 19. But we don't know everything that happened in two or three years there, and he may in fact have been thrown to wild beasts and somehow been spared by a miracle. However, most commentators would feel that wild beasts here is a reference not to actual animals, but to men who are no better than wild beasts and who are like savage wolves and so forth.

He does, after all, refer to Nero as the lion, it would seem, in 2 Timothy, where it says he was spared from the lion's mouth when it's being delivered from Nero's court. Hard to say. We don't know whether Paul actually faced wild animals.

If so, it's not recorded in Acts. He may be speaking metaphorically. He says, if there's no resurrection, let's live it up.

If there's no devil to pay, if there's no collection day for our lives and how we live, let's just live them to the full right now. Now, verse 35, but someone will say, how are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come? Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be but mere grain, perhaps wheat or some other grain.

But God gives it a body as he pleases, and to each its own body. All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fish, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, which means heavenly bodies, and terrestrial bodies, earthly.

Terrestrial means earthly. Celestial means heavenly. But the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.

There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, for one star differs from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption but raised in incorruption.

It is sown in dishonor, it's raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown in natural body, but it's raised a spiritual body.

There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, the first man Adam became a living being. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust. The second man is the Lord from heaven.

As was the man of dust, so are those who are made of dust, us. And as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly man, meaning the resurrection form of body that Jesus had.

Now I read the entire thing, partly because there's really not a natural stopping point that had to be made. All of this is said in response to a question he anticipates in verse 35. Someone's going to say, how are the dead raised and with what body do they come? Now his answer is, you're a fool.

Foolish one to ask this question. Now there's a couple of ways to understand the question. One could be an honest question that Christians, Christians who have no objection to the whole doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, but are just curious, would ask.

I could ask this, you could ask this. I've been asked it many times in question and answer times in YWAM schools and on the radio people say, well what's the resurrection body going to be like? So I say, you fool, you shouldn't ask such a question. I don't know why that would be a foolish question if it's simply asking for information.

It's a natural question people would ask. Now it's possible that Paul is saying it's foolish to ask that kind of question because after all we don't know the answer. We can't answer it.

It's like, you know, you sow a seed and something comes out very different than the seed. You couldn't tell by looking at the seed what kind of body is going to come out and neither can you tell by looking at our present bodies what kind of a body we'll have when it's glorified. It's that different.

That's one argument he could be using, but I suspect that the questions in verse 35 are not a sincere, he's not anticipating sincere curiosity on the part of those who believe in the resurrection, but that they're asked as a challenge to the doctrine of the resurrection. They're asked in defiance. Like, how could the body rise? What kind of body is it going to be that's going to live forever? Who's going to imagine a body like that? As if to question the validity of the doctrine itself, as I say, it makes a big difference whether the question is simply a Christian who believes in the resurrection but would like more information, or somebody who's asking these questions as a way of defying and challenging the very doctrine and suggesting that these questions render absurd the doctrine of the resurrection, as if there can be no honest answer that would make sense.

You know, when the Sadducees came to Jesus asking him about the resurrection, they basically put a question to him about a woman who married seven brothers successively. Each one died, and the law required her to marry the next brother. All died childless, and all had her at various times, and they all died.

They said, in the resurrection, who's is she going to be? Now, that kind of question could be a question that an honest person would ask. I mean, someone who believed in the resurrection could ask, well, that's an interesting case. You know, what if you've had more than one wife in your lifetime? When you're resurrected, you know, who's it going to be? It's like, I'm often asked, in heaven are we going to recognize our wives and our children and our parents? Are we going to still know each other as we do now? I mean, that's the same kind of question.

You know, if I've been married two times, three times, what about when I'm in heaven? Whose husband am I? A question like that isn't foolish or irreverent, as near as I can tell, if it's not issued to challenge the truthful doctrine, but simply to gain more insight into what it means and what it involves. The Sadducees, however, raised the question, not for information, but to try to prove that there is no good answer to these questions. That if a woman has had seven husbands, there can be no solution to the difficulty of the resurrection, and therefore the resurrection is an absurdity, because you cannot imagine one of these men having more claim upon her than the other six, nor can you imagine her having all seven of them as husbands in the resurrection.

Therefore, the resurrection doctrine doesn't make sense. It's stupid. And the question, therefore, that the Sadducees raised is not one of seeking clarity, but one of seeking to debunk.

And I think that the questions here that Paul is anticipating are the same thing. It's not that someone is asking, sincerely wanting to know. It's that these questions are supposed to show the absurdity, by asking the question to try to underscore how crazy it is to believe in the resurrection.

How are the dead raised up? I mean, think about it. There's a tree growing in a

churchyard, an apple tree, and the root goes down into the ground through a grave, through a coffin, through a body. That tree has taken nutrients out of the ground and out of the body that its root has gone through.

Some of the atoms that were part of that body are now part of the tree. Some of those atoms become part of apples. Some of those apples are eaten by us and become parts of our bodies.

How is God going to trace all these atoms? How is he going to restore these bodies when they've gone to the dust? What if some of them have been scattered to the fishes at sea? What if they were cremated and thrown to sea and fishes have eaten them? And those fish have since been eaten by other fishes and so forth. How is God going to find all the molecules to raise the dead? People ask this kind of question. They don't ask it to get information.

They ask it to show it's absurd to believe in the resurrection of the dead. Someone will say, how are the dead raised up? What kind of body do they come in? Do you remember we watched that debate between a Christian and an atheist? And the atheist said, well, how did Jesus breathe when he went up into heaven? After all, the Bible says he breathed on his disciples, so he still was breathing after the resurrection. He ascended up into outer space.

How did he breathe up there? This is essentially like saying, what kind of body does he have anyway? How can he survive out there? Same kind of stupid objection. And Paul says that those who are asking this question are dumb. It's a stupid question.

It's not stupid to be curious, but it's stupid to reject the doctrine of the resurrection on the basis of these kinds of challenges. He says, foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. Now, his statement about plants and seeds and so forth actually comes from Jesus himself.

In John 12, Jesus said, accept a grain of wheat, fall into the ground and die. It remains alone. But if it does die, he said, it brings forth much fruit.

That's John 12, 24. Paul picks up the same idea. A plant doesn't grow unless a seed dies.

But the death of the seed is not its end. It's understood by us all that when a seed dies in the ground, it resurrects as a plant. Now, it does not necessarily follow that since seeds do that, we will do that.

But the gospel teaches that we will do that. And he's saying that there's nothing absurd about it. In nature, we see corresponding similar things whenever we plant a seed.

Whatever seed. It may chance of wheat or some other seed. It doesn't matter what kind of seed it is.

You plant it, it has to die. But when it dies, you expect it to come up alive in a better form than before. And he says that's just one way that nature illustrates the concept of death and resurrection.

There is life after death. There is for every seed. And God gives it a body as he pleases.

Then with reference to the question of what kind of body do they come in, he basically says, listen, there's celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies. We are familiar with terrestrial bodies. The new body will be a heavenly body, a celestial body, and therefore we will not be able to tell you, nor does one even need to ask, what it's like.

There's degrees of glory. Even the various heavenly bodies, the sun, moon, and stars have different degrees of glory. So there's a different glory.

There's a different radiance. There's a different quality to the celestial bodies that we anticipate than there is to the present bodies that we now have. Now, he says, it'll be really different in several ways.

He says in verse 42, so it is in the resurrection that the body is sown in corruption. That means sown in a condition subject to the second law of thermodynamics. Sown, susceptible to decay.

Corruption means decayable. It is sown in that condition, but raised in incorruption, which means that when it is raised from the dead, there will be no more decay. You will not grow old.

Your skin won't wrinkle. You won't get, you know, worn out. Your bones won't become brittle or bent with age.

The body you are going to be raised in will be not subject to decay. The processes of aging in time will not be a factor. Verse 43, it is sown in dishonor.

Death is a dishonorable thing. It's a shameful thing in a sense. It's a punishment for men's sin and it's extremely embarrassing.

I remember some famous guy was quoted saying, I'm not so much afraid of death as ashamed of it or embarrassed by it or something like that. It's the great equalizer. Some people try to keep it otherwise.

I heard the story of a very wealthy man who desired in his will that when he was buried, he'd be buried in style. In fact, he was to be buried sitting in a tuxedo behind the wheel of his Cadillac, a brand new gold Cadillac. And at his funeral, they had this corpse dressed up in a tuxedo seated behind the wheel of a Cadillac, behind the steering wheel, and a crane was lowering this Cadillac into the grave that was dug for it.

And of course, the Cadillac was to be his coffin. And the guy operating the crane was

heard to say as he was lowering the Cadillac down, boy, that's living. But it isn't.

That's man's attempt to try to hold on to the glory of life in the face of the embarrassment and shame of death. It just looks silly. It just looks silly when someone tries to avoid the dishonor that is associated with death and maintain the glory and the prestige and so forth that he had in his life.

Death is the great embarrassment. And the dead body that we die in is sown or planted in the ground in dishonor. But it's raised up in glory.

It's a glorious body. It's sown in weakness. Any number of weaknesses.

You might have weak eyes, a weakened brain, you might have a weak mind, you might have weak muscles, but not in the resurrection. You just look me up. Verse 44, it is sown a natural body.

It is raised a spiritual body. Then he takes off and there is a natural body and there's a spiritual body. Now, Jehovah's Witnesses and some others believe that the resurrection body is not physical.

They even believe Jesus didn't physically rise from the dead. They believe he rose as a spirit creature, that his body just dissolved in the tomb and he became a spirit. They use this passage to prove it because he says there's a natural body and there's a spiritual body.

The resurrection body is spiritual, they say, not physical. However, notice Paul does not contrast the spiritual body with the physical body, which would be a fairly natural thing to do. He contrasts the spiritual body with a natural body.

Spiritual here is not in contrast to physical. Spiritual in this place does not mean non-physical. It is contrasted with natural.

Therefore, spiritual means supernatural as opposed to natural. It is physical and that's quite clear from the resurrection stories of Jesus. But it's not a natural body, it's a supernatural physical body, which Paul uses the word spiritual for supernatural here.

And so, he mentions that Adam was made a man of dust, however Christ has been made a life-giving spiritual body, a life-giving spiritual man and just as we have borne the image of the man of dust because we came from him, so the time will come in the resurrection where we'll bear the image of the glorified man from heaven, Jesus. Verse 15, Behold, now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does corruption inherit incorruption. The kingdom of God in its final consummation in the new heaven and new earth is not going to be entered by people in natural bodies, which proves premillennialism has to be wrong because premillennialism equates the kingdom of God with the millennium.

However, they believe that some people, unbelievers, are coming into the millennium in their natural bodies. But Paul said, no, the kingdom of God is not going to be inherited by people in natural bodies, they have to be resurrected. Behold, I tell you, by the way, flesh and blood is what he describes as the condition that is not entering the kingdom of God.

You might say, I thought you said the physical body, the resurrection body is physical. Yes, it is flesh, but it's not flesh and blood. When Jesus rose from the dead, he said, touch me and feel me and see, a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see me have.

He didn't say that he had flesh and blood, he had flesh and bones. Life of natural flesh is in the blood. Apparently the spiritual life of resurrection body is in some other component than blood.

It could be argued it would be a bloodless body, but not a non-physical one. Flesh and bones, yes. Flesh and blood, no.

Verse 51, Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, of course meaning die, but we shall all be changed. I've seen that verse posted on the doors of church nurseries.

We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, for the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised incorruptible. He doesn't just say the dead in Christ here, but the dead.

The dead will be raised incorruptible. That includes the living and the dead. And apparently the incorruptible-ness of the wicked will be that which makes it possible for them to burn forever.

And we shall be changed, that is those of us who aren't dead yet, for this corruptible must put on incorruption. This mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory.

Oh death, where's your sting? Oh Hades, where is your victory? He says the sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law. As Paul said over in Romans chapter 7, that the law was dead. I mean the sin was dead before the law came, but when the law came, sin revived.

The strength of sin to be sin and to condemn us as sinners is found in a law. There has to be a law to define our action to make it sinful or at least a transgression to make it up to you. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory, both over sin and death, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore my beloved brethren be steadfast and movable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. As Paul himself faced wild

beasts through the Ephesus and was not put off by the fact that he could die in that condition because there was a resurrection he looked forward to. So you keep doing your work, your labor is not in vain.

You know a lot of people appear to work in vain. A lot of people live for God and suffer every day of their life and die. And it seems like righteousness was in vain.

Certainly in Ecclesiastes Solomon complained that that appeared to be the case. Sometimes there's this great inequity in the earth that a man, you know, he's wise and he's righteous and so forth, but he dies like anyone else and there's nothing to show for it. But it wasn't in vain because he has another life to look forward to in the resurrection.

And that is the belief in the resurrection is to encourage a steadfastness and a movableness and a continuous abounding in the work of the Lord in us. Not moved from it by threats of death, since threats of death of course only affect this life. But we are looking forward to another in an immortal body.

I didn't comment much on verses 50 through 53. I don't know that much needs to be said. Obviously he's talking about the resurrection and the rapture.

Same two things he was talking about in 1 Thessalonians 4 verses 14 through 18. He says, we shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed. Some of us are going to die and some are not.

The ones who do will be resurrected. The ones who don't will be changed. Paul doesn't mention here being caught up to meet the Lord in the air like he does in 1 Thessalonians 4 verse 17.

But he does mention being changed. Those of us who are alive when Jesus comes back, he clearly means that when he says we shall be changed at the end of verse 52 because that's in addition to the dead will be raised incorruptible. The dead will be raised and we which is another category than the dead, he's hypothetically including himself with whoever it may be that's alive when this happens, will be changed.

So along with being caught up to meet the Lord in the air which he tells us of in 1 Thessalonians 4, there is a change in our general nature and composition which he tells us about here which is a change from mortality to immortality, from dishonor to glory, from weakness to strength, and from corruption to incorruption. So this is the resurrection body we look forward to. It is essentially the same as the body that Jesus had in his resurrection according to Philippians chapter 3, Philippians 3 verses 20 and 21.

Paul says, For our citizenship is in heaven from which also eagerly we wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to his glorious body according to the working by which he is able even to subdue all things himself. When Jesus transforms our body it will be into the likeness of his glorious body,

his resurrection body. Now the final chapter of 1 Corinthians covers a number of topics.

Let's look at it. Now concerning the collection for the saints, As I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also, on the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, strewing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. And I when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem.

But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me. Now the collection for the saints refers to the fact that we read of in the book of Acts that Paul when he was among the Gentile churches sometimes was gathering money to give to the Jewish saints because they were facing financial crunches. And he wanted to affirm the unity between the Jewish and Gentile churches since that was questioned a great deal, especially by those in the Jewish church.

Those in the Jewish church tended to be suspicious of Paul because he didn't really exalt the law in the way that they liked to. And they tended to wonder whether he was on their side. And one of the ways he liked to give tokens of unity was to have the Gentile churches where he ministered send practical relief to those Jewish Christians who were in special need.

So as he went around from church to church he would tell them to take up a collection and it would be sent to the saints in Jerusalem. Here he says you can pick whichever men you want to carry it or if you want me to go I will go with them. But he was not, he was going to make himself accountable.

He wouldn't just say thanks for the money I'll take it to the saints in Jerusalem and then just disappear from view. They could send men along to keep him honest. That's what he said he would make himself accountable.

Now he said to lay something up on the first day of the week. This verse and only one other verse in the entire Bible are sometimes given as proof that the Christians met regularly on Sunday, the first day of the week. Sabbath was the seventh day of the week and that's identified with our Saturday.

But the first day of the week obviously is Sunday. And so he said I want you to lay up this money on the first day of the week. The other verse that is sometimes used to prove that Christians met every Sunday is Acts chapter 20 and verse 7. In Acts 20 and verse 7 Paul is on his final visit to Jerusalem, he's actually on his way to Jerusalem, he's journeying there and he stops at Troas to minister and it says in verse 7, Acts 20 and verse 7, Now on the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread Paul ready to depart the next day spoke to them and continued with his message till midnight.

We won't go into that story because of our shortage of time but notice it says on the first

day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread Paul spoke to them. It sounds as if they had a weekly meeting on Sunday on the first day of the week where they gathered to break bread and to hear preaching. And well that may be true, I have no reason to dispute that.

However the verse doesn't say that. The verse just says that Paul spoke to them at a meal they were having on a Sunday. It does not say that they met regularly on Sunday.

It might have been that Paul was leaving the next day, it just happened he came on a Saturday, or on a Sunday, excuse me, and he was leaving the next day so they had a meeting for him to speak to them at a meal in his honor. Hard to say. However it is entirely possible that we have here the first reference in the Bible to Christian meetings on Sunday.

Now the other verse is this one in 1 Corinthians 16, 2, on the first day of the week let each of you lay up something aside. Of course we have the cultural concept of taking offerings at a church meeting. I simply point out Paul doesn't say anything about meeting on the first day of the week, only laying something aside on the first day of every week.

That laying aside could have been taking place at home, we do not know. It may be referring to a collection that was taken on the first day of the week at a church meeting, if such meetings were being held on Sundays in those days, or it may simply be that he's saying at the beginning of each week I want you to put something aside so that you'll have a certain amount ready when I come. It doesn't have to be laid out at a church meeting.

He makes no reference here to a church meeting, though there may well have been one and that may have been the occasion for their laying up the money. Verse 5, Now I will come to you when I pass through Macedonia, for I am passing through Macedonia. Macedonia was northern Greece.

Corinth was in Achaia, that's southern Greece. So Paul was going to pass through northern Greece and he figured he'd come south and see them down there in Achaia as well. But it may be that I will remain or even spend the winter with you, that you may send me on my journey wherever I go.

That means with some money usually. For I do not wish to see you now on the way, but I hope to stay a while with you if the Lord permits. If he wants to get to Macedonia, for some reason he doesn't want to be detained in Corinth.

He wants to get directly to Macedonia for some reason. However, not immediately. But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost.

Pentecost is somewhere in the summer time, June, July, sometime like that. So he

figured that he was at Ephesus now and he says in verse 9, A great and effective door, which means an opportunity has opened to me and there are many adversaries. He's got a tremendous opportunity to minister in Ephesus at that particular time.

So he's going to stay there at least until Pentecost, which might have been only a few weeks off or a few months. But after Pentecost, which would be June or July, he'd be making his trip to Macedonia and hoping to get to Corinth by winter and maybe spend the whole winter with them is what he's saying. He makes it clear here in verses 8 and 9 that he's writing the letter from Ephesus.

Verse 10. Now, if Timothy comes, that is, since Paul can't come immediately, he might send Timothy in his place. See that he may be with you without fear.

Timothy seems to be a guy who is given to a bit of timidity because Paul tells Timothy in 1 Timothy 1, God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of love and a power of a sound mind. So stir up that gift that's in you. Implying that Timothy himself had to overcome some fears in his life.

And now he tells them, if Timothy comes to you, let him be without fear. Also, Paul told Timothy, let no one despise your youth. It's possible because Timothy was young that older people in general tended to question his authority, even though he was sent by an apostle.

His youth may have caused some people not to take him as seriously as they should. And it may have been an awareness of that on Timothy's part that made him a little intimidated about going places and speaking authoritatively. He might have been a little fearful about that because he knew some people would say he was just a punk kid.

But he but Paul not only tells Timothy in 1 Timothy not to be afraid, but he tells the people, if Timothy comes to you, don't scare him. See to it that he can be with you without fear, for he does the work of the Lord, as I also do. Therefore, let no one despise him.

Likewise, he told Timothy, let no one despise your youth. Now he tells the people who are inclined to do so, don't despise his youth, don't disregard him, in other words, or think little of him. But send him on his journey in peace, that he may come to me, for I am waiting for him with the brethren.

Now, concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to come to you with the brethren, but he was quite unwilling to come at this time. However, he will come to you when he has a convenient time. Paul strongly urged Apollos to come to Corinth, but Apollos said, I don't want to.

Paul doesn't say Apollos had something better to do or didn't feel that, he just said he wasn't willing to. He didn't want to. And yet Paul makes no criticism of him.

He just says, well, he'll come when he can. I was hoping he'd come soon, but it looks like he may not. It shows that Paul and Apollos were in communication.

Paul considered Apollos a partner enough that since Paul couldn't make it, he'd be happy if Apollos could go instead. Yet Apollos was in no sense taking any orders from Paul. He wasn't submitted to Paul, quite obviously.

And yet there can be no doubt Paul had a higher rank in the church than Apollos. Paul was clearly an apostle. We never read such things about Apollos.

It shows that Paul was not into the whole mentality of shepherding that says, if you don't submit to me in my role, you're a rebel, and that's as bad as witchcraft. He didn't say anything like that about Apollos, even though Apollos was unsubmitted to Paul in this matter. Verse 13, watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.

The expression be brave there in verse 13 actually literally is quit you like men. Quit you like men is the literal. And basically what it means is, I don't know that it's literal.

I should say that's the more traditional rendering. The same expression is found in 1 Samuel 4, 9 when the Philistines saw that the ark was coming, they got scared and they encouraged each other saying, quit you like men, which meant be courageous, play the man, don't be a wimp. You know, Paul says the same thing to the Corinthians.

They're facing a lot of a real warfare against the encroachment of the carnality of the world around them. And he wants them to fight bravely and to stand like men against it. Let all that you do be done with love.

Sounds agreeable with what he said earlier in chapter 13. I urge you, brethren, you know, the household of Stephanus, that it is the first fruits of a kayak. Paul mentioned in chapter one that he had baptized the household of Stephanus and a few others, but not many others.

They were the first converts there and that they have devoted themselves. The King James has addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints, which means serving the Christians. These people are devoted or addicted to serving the Christian saints.

He says that you also submit to such and to everyone who works labors with us. These men, this household of Stephanus are to be submitted to because they prove themselves true chiefs in the sense that Jesus said, they're the servants of all. They've addicted themselves to the serving of the saints.

Therefore, they are truly chief. They are truly leaders and therefore submit to them and all others who labor with us. I am glad about the coming of Stephanus, Fortunatus and Archaicus for what was lacking on your part.

They supplied probably meaning information or even money for they refreshed my spirit in yours. Therefore, acknowledge such men. The churches of Asia greet you, Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord.

So they were with Paul at Ephesus at this time, though they later moved to Rome according to Romans 16 with the church that is in their house. They had a church in their house in Rome also, according to Romans 16. But when they lived in Ephesus, they had a church in their house there too.

They were addicted to home church. All the brethren greet you, greet one another with a holy kiss. Standard closing, the salutation of my own hand.

Paul, if anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, Maranatha, it says in the original, both of which are not Greek words, but Aramaic words. Maranatha means our Lord come and anathema means cursed to the lowest hell. So anyone who doesn't love Jesus, let him be a curse.

The Lord is coming or Maranatha could be a prayer or a statement. Either the Lord is coming or O Lord come, can translate either way. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen. I would say more about Maranatha if I knew more.

Some people say it was a common saying among Christians, a greeting that they said among themselves. Maranatha, which means O Lord come. It could have been.

I'm afraid I don't know enough about the history. The Bible doesn't give us any clues about it. But Paul is stating it in Aramaic rather than the Greek of the rest of the book.

He may be quoting an Aramaic expression that the Christians commonly used among themselves. And that would explain his use of it there. It's the only place in the Bible that we find the word Maranatha.

And it's a word of course that has come to prominence in recent times by certain organizations naming themselves by that name. It means O Lord come. And that brings us to the end of 1 Corinthians.