

Those in the Corinthian church, who were rejecting the teaching of a future physical resurrection of believers, needed some convincing. The Corinthians were probably strongly influenced by their cultural beliefs, i.e., the Greek rejection of a bodily resurrection (though they believed in the immortality of the spirit) and the popular Jewish conjecture that resurrection bodies would be identical to the body before it had died.

Paul either quotes the doubters or puts their doubts into words (v 35). Paul called such questioning foolish. It is equally possible that he was calling the questioners foolish. The term used would indicate that they were not using their minds. They were not thinking. If they would just observe creation and every day life, they could apply it to the resurrection and answer their doubts for themselves.

I. Principles for the resurrection that can be seen in creation (15:36-41).

1. *Death naturally precedes new life (15:36).* This is illustrated by the necessity of the decay of a seed in order that new life come from it. Cf. John 12:24. For those who would hear, the concept of the resurrection – that life can follow death and decay – is not contrary to what they observe every day in creation around them.
2. *A change can be expected (15:37).* That which grows from the seed is not identical to the seed which was sown: a seed goes into the ground and a plant comes out. In the resurrection as well a change can be expected, contrary to the Greek or Jewish thinking.
3. *Identity is preserved (15:38-39).* Although the change from seed to plant is expected, identity is preserved. Wheat seeds produce wheat stalks; apple seeds produce apple trees. The essential identity is preserved. Verse 39 may serve to further illustrate this. A change is indicated by the use of “flesh” instead of “body” and the move from plant life to animate life. There are distinct groupings of animate life, but the same material (or “flesh”) groups certain creatures together and distinguishes it from others. In the same way the seed and the resulting plant share the same material but are distinguished from others. In the resurrection identity will also be preserved. When the body is resurrected it will be changed, but it will not be something unrelated to the old.
4. *Differing purposes have different requirements (15:40-41).* This is perhaps the most difficult to deduce. Paul moves back from using “flesh” to “body” and also moves from living creation to inanimate creation, the heavens and the earth. The heavenly bodies (vs 40) are the sun, moon and stars (vs 41). By way of analogy we might conjecture that the earthly bodies correspond to features of the physical creation of the earth, like the mountains and hills, rivers and seas, which with the heavenly bodies point to God and His glory. Never-the-less they do so in different manners and to different decrees. They must be different in order to communicate in the different manners in which they do. So also in the resurrection we can expect that the differing condition after the resurrection will require a different body to serve it.

Those Corinthians who were objecting to the resurrection, needed to open their eyes to the God-given object lessons in His creation.

II. Application to the resurrection (15:42-49)

The analogy in creation and particularly in sowing teaches us that change can be expected in the resurrection.

1. *Four tremendous differences characterize the change which the resurrection will bring (15:42-44a).*
 - a. There will be a change in our mortality: from perishable to imperishable. Aging (in the negative sense) and death will be no more.
 - b. There will be a change in our status: from dishonor to glory. “Dishonor” was used sometimes for the loss of citizenship. The dead are like a person without citizenship, without rights, despised and cast out. The dead for the Jews were unclean. Not so the resurrection body. Those in Christ will be raised in glory.
 - c. There will be a change in our ability: from weakness to power. Our bodies are relatively weak physically. We are susceptible to illness, disease, and injury. Even worse in this body we are spiritually weak, prone to sin. In the NIV the phrase which we read elsewhere, the “sinful nature”, is literally, the “flesh.” In its very terminology our weaknesses to sin is associated with our current state of existence. While in this body we struggle against the power of sin. But in the resurrection weakness will give way to power, sickness to strength.
 - d. There will be a change in our suitability: we now have a natural body (one suited for life primarily and especially in this physical world), then it will be a spiritual body (one especially and primarily suited for life in the spirit world). This does not mean non-physical, but rather especially attuned to and answering to the needs of the spirit.
2. *The essential nature of the difference lies in our ancestry (15:44b-49).* People are descended either from Adam only (having only his nature of being suited to physical life) or from Christ (having His nature of being suited for life in heaven). All our natural characteristics come from Adam, but all who are born of Christ will bear his likeness (v 49). See Philippians 3:20-21 and 1 John 3:2.

The pattern for the resurrection body is the resurrected body of Jesus Christ: physical (Luke 24:39), essentially the same (Luke 24:40), but changed to live in the spirit world.

This is a comfort for all those who struggle with sickness and weakness, a challenge to be sure that we are in Christ, and a motivation to continue working for Christ (15:58; cf. 15:12-20). Our work is not in vain; suffering has a conclusion and a purpose. Keep looking up. Our redemption is getting nearer!