

1Corinthians 15:45-50 "Are You a Completed Human Being?"

1CO 15:45-50 "So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. 46 The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. 47 The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. 48 As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. 49 And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven. 50 I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable."

As we come to our text this morning we see how Paul is going to make a comparison between the natural man, including those ungodly traits which resulted from sin, and the spiritual man, who will one day, in Christ, be free from any restraints as it relates to the sinful nature.

Keep in mind that all of this is in the context of the resurrection of believers and the apparent doubts from these Corinthians that the dead are raised. Paul is answering two questions he raised in this letter which deal with how the dead are raised, and with what kind of body do they come?

If believers are not raised from the dead then answering these two questions would be an exercise in fantasy and futility. But Paul is about to go so far as to give an explanation of the vast differences between the natural and the spiritual as it relates to the final state of the human body of believers.

1CO 15:45 "So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit."

Paul begins by placing side by side two distinct people and showing how each is different in glory and yet both are still quite human. The comparison is between the first and the last Adam.

We know who the first Adam is. This is the Adam who is described in Genesis as the one whom God created from the dust of the earth, as Paul mentions here in verse 47 of our text. It is this Adam who was created a living being. What does Paul mean by this?

Well, in the beginning there was a time in which man was no more than a composite of elements of the earth. Unfortunately, segments of the world, including parts of the scientific community, still continues to view man in this way. In fact, it's not uncommon to hear of descriptions of human beings in terms of what we would be worth on the market if we were broken down into our basic elemental parts.

I've heard it said that each of us might be worth a couple of hundred dollars considering the amount of hydrogen, calcium, oxygen, and so on, which make up a human body.

It's not uncommon to read in any biology text book found in our public schools that human beings really are nothing more than a complex evolutionary animal. But what Paul is describing in our text, and what we read in Genesis, is that man is not simply a compilation of elements found in the earth, nor some ancestor of an amoeba, but a God-created living being.

This living being is a product of the One who can give life. The whole concept of evolution stands or falls on the ability of matter to create itself from nothing and then for that non-living, non-intelligent matter to produce complex life on its own.

If our children were to come home from school with a pebble in a jar and inform us that they were going to plant that pebble in the earth and expect it to produce a butterfly we would be amused at their creativity to dream such things and to believe that they could expect such life and beauty from a rock.

If I were to come to you this morning with that same jar and rock and story, it would no longer be cute and amusing, it would be a real concern on your part that maybe I've finally snapped. And yet, when scientists tell us that these things actually happen, otherwise smart people, somehow lose the ability to reason as human beings and jump at the opportunity to believe such nonsense.

We are not the product of globs of protoplasm formed in some primordial soup millions of years ago, which then decided it would like to live on dry land, or a condo on the beach. We are the product of the only Creator God who chose to form us from the dust of the earth and give us life which was meant to be shared with Him for eternity.

This life goes way beyond the ability to breathe and eat. This life includes in man's very makeup, not only the physical but also the spiritual. Man is body and spirit. Or as some would describe us, body, soul and spirit, with the spirit of man being that part which was designed to transcend the physical.

And so, when Paul makes this comparison between the earthy and the spiritual he is describing two different men, two different Adams, whose origins are from two different spheres. The first man is a creature, a living being, or as the NASB puts it, a "living soul."

The last Adam is described as a life giving spirit. Notice that there is a spiritual aspect to both Adams. But we know that the first Adam started out as a physical creation as God took the dust of the earth and formed the physical body of Adam. It wasn't until God breathed into Adam that he became this living soul.

Unlike the first Adam, the last Adam was not created but is eternal with the ability to give life. In fact, it is the last Adam who was there in the beginning as He gave this life to the first Adam. How do we know this?

John 1:1-4 ^{NAU} In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ *All things came into being through Him*, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. ⁴ *In Him was life*, and the life was the Light of men.

Now, what we need to understand about the two Adams is that the last Adam is best understood to have been a true Adam only as He was conceived as a human being, thus taking on flesh. The reason this is important to understand is because both Adams represent groups of people.

The first Adam represented all mankind, before sin, making him our federal head if you will. The last Adam must therefore be like the first. Since a covenant was made by God with the first Adam which had dual sanctions, (if you obey you live, if you disobey you die), and since he disobeyed he died, then the last Adam must be able to suffer death to remove the wrath of God on those for whom He died.

Therefore the last Adam necessarily must be fully human to accomplish this. But since no mere human is able to accomplish

this in himself the last Adam must also be perfect in all ways and therefore must also be God.

This is why the last Adam is a life giving spirit in that the Spirit of Christ is the one who imparts this life from above. And this is why Jesus told Nicodemus that you must be born from above, or born again.

It is the same Spirit who regenerates us from death to life.

Titus 3:5-6 ⁵ He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, *by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,* ⁶ whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

^{NAU} **John 5:21** "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.

And so, the first Adam is from this world while the last Adam is not from this world but has entered into this world from above to bring His people into His presence.

1 Corinthians 15:46-48 ⁴⁶ However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. ⁴⁸ As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly.

Here Paul is identifying the natural as the first man who is from the earth. He then identifies the spiritual as the second man who is not from the earth but from heaven.

And so, he is distinguishing these two men, who are representatives of their particular groups, as different but with similar tasks.

Paul says that the natural is first while the spiritual is second. There may be a couple of ways to take this. We know, as we stated earlier, that Adam was first formed as a physical being but whose life was not present until the spiritual, that is, God's life was given to him.

And so, in this sense the spiritual aspect of man was not first but was second in the chronology of God forming and giving life to man.

But the context is really about two different men, both identified as Adam. And as we saw earlier the implication is that both were federal heads of their respective groups; the first Adam was head of all mankind to follow him, while the last Adam was the federal head of all that literally followed Him by faith.

Each group would then be identified as either being “in Adam”, or “in Christ” with the respective curse or blessing found in each

1 Corinthians 15:22 ²² For as *in Adam all die*, so also *in Christ all will be made alive*..

And so, in this sense the first Adam of the earth was necessarily followed by the second Adam, Christ, who is from heaven, thus indicating that the last Adam is spiritual and heavenly and who comes from the throne of God as He is sent from the Father to redeem a people for Himself as other texts of Scripture make clear.

But then Paul makes the comment that those who are represented by their respective Adam’s will in fact reflect their respective Adam’s.

1 Corinthians 15:48 ⁴⁸ As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly.

We all know what it means to be earthy in Adam as each of us were identified with his death sentence and continue to live in that state until Christ makes us alive.

And now, we who are in Christ are made new creations fit for the new heavens and new earth.

^{NAU} **2 Corinthians 5:17** Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

Here we get a glimpse of the already/not yet eschatological aspect of our new life in Christ. On the one hand we are declared to be new creatures in Christ today and yet we have the promise of a future realization of this new life in glorified bodies.

^{NAU} **Philippians 3:20** For our citizenship is in heaven [*today*], from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹ who will [*in the future*] transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

And so, in a very real sense we who are in Christ today reflect the “heavenly” aspect of our Savior as we are daily conformed into His image.

1 Corinthians 15:49 ⁴⁹ Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, *we will also bear the image of the heavenly.*

2 Corinthians 3:18 ¹⁸ But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are *being transformed* into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

And this is what Paul also explained to the church in Rome as he reminded them that they were called out by God to be conformed into the image of the Son, which would begin taking place at conversion as well as the culmination of that process in glory,

Romans 8:29-30 ²⁹ For those whom He foreknew, He also *predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son*, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; ³⁰ and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; *and these whom He justified, He also glorified.*

We are to grow up in Christ today and forever.

Ephesians 4:15 ¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to *grow up in all aspects into Him* who is the head, *even* Christ,

2 Peter 3:18 ¹⁸ but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory, *both now and to the day of eternity.* Amen.

By the way, when Paul compares the earthy with the spiritual in our context he is making a moral statement about the flesh and a moral statement about the spiritual as it relates to sinful flesh and the righteousness found in Christ.

However, we need to be careful not to take that too far because nowhere is the flesh viewed as inherently evil as part of the original creation, which is to say that the earthy aspect of man, coupled with the spiritual righteousness of Christ put to our account, completes the man in a way that cannot be complete outside of Christ.

Man was always meant to dwell with God in both body and spirit as is plainly taught in Genesis as the man and the woman were complete and perfect and were declared, along with the rest of God’s creation, as being very good.

And so, Paul is not making a statement about man as being earthy and spiritual in the ontological sense but in the covenantal sense that since the first Adam sinned, he along with all he represents, suffer the consequences of the rebellion of that covenantal arrangement that God imposed on man.

Genesis 2:16-17 ¹⁶ The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; ¹⁷ but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for *in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.*"

Being earthy and spiritual is what man was always meant to be as a created being. And being earthy and spiritual is what all of God's people will be for eternity which is the hope that Paul puts forth in this letter to the Corinthians as he makes clear in the resurrection of the body.

This is what it means to be a completed human being in the best sense as our spirits are reunited to our bodies and we are found complete in Christ at the resurrection, a teaching that Paul sums up at the end of this chapter..

1 Corinthians 15:52-55 ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. ⁵⁵ "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?"

We'll deal with this text next week in some detail as we'll see how the elimination of death completes God's plan for His people to dwell with Him in body and spirit.

Now, we've all heard the term "completed Jew." When I lived in Fort Lauderdale, I fellowshiped with a ministry called "Beth Yeshua", which in Hebrew means House of Jesus, or House of the Savior. Pastor Ray Cohen taught and disciplined all sorts of people, both Jews and Gentiles.

But his heart was to equip both Jews and Gentiles to reach out to the Jewish community in Ft. Lauderdale and Miami. And it was not uncommon to speak of those Jewish converts as completed Jews.

And what that meant was that these physical descendants of Abraham, separated from God because of their rejection of the Messiah, were now complete in their true identification as the chosen people of God, (the true Israel made up of both Jew and Gentile), because of their faith in Christ.

Galatians 3:28-29 ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ *And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.*

And yet what they really became were completed human beings. The original design by God for man was to be united to God forever. And now, in Christ, both Jews and Gentiles have become completed humans as we have been given a new life, and a new goal which is heavenly, but will find its fulfillment on the earth, the new earth.

Paul assures us of this completion and this unification to God forever in Christ.

PHI 1:6 "being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

This is the true quality of life God intended for all mankind. And this type of relationship is available for all who would come to Christ for completion in the best sense of the word.

Outside of Christ there are no completed human beings, again being less than what a human was originally created by God to be; a worshipper of, and fellowshipper with God. And so, when the world tells us that we can only be complete or fulfilled by the type of job we have, or the amount of money we possess, or the status of life we hold, they are speaking non-sense.

To be complete is to be united to Christ. To demonstrate that completeness is to walk in that relationship every day in the power of the Spirit. But to be completed in Christ carries the responsibility to let the world know what a completed human being truly is. A human being who trusts and follows the Lord. As fellow human beings we owe it to the rest of humanity to make them aware.

But as Paul continues his comparison between the first Adam, of this present earth, and the last Adam, who came from above, he reminds us that in the first Adam, (post-fall), that everyone who is

identified with him cannot be part of God's everlasting community, His Kingdom.

1CO 15:50 "I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable."

Notice what Paul does here. In a sense he is incorporating what is known as Hebrew parallelism. This was a common form of communication in the O.T. Scriptures where the writer would pen something for emphasis by saying the same thing in two different ways.

There are many examples but we'll look at a familiar passage in the O.T. that utilizes this parallelism.

Isaiah 53:5 ⁵ But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.

Here we have two forms of parallelism within one verse. In the beginning of verse 5 we have the parallel between being "pierced for our transgressions" and "crushed for our iniquities."

Same thought written with different words to express the same idea. The same is true with the end of the verse where the Messiah is seen to be chastened for our well-being, and then this same chastening is demonstrated with the picture of Him being crushed for our iniquities.

And so, chastening and being crushed identify something that causes our healing or our well-being.

In our text in 1Corinthians 15:50 Paul is identifying that which is perishable with that which is flesh and blood. In other words, Paul is clearly pointing out that the flesh and blood that he is identifying is a flesh and blood that is identified with that which will die, which is to say, a flesh and blood that is identified with the first Adam who sinned.

In other words, the flesh and blood that cannot inherit the kingdom of God is a body that is tied to this present earth and a body that will eventually return to the earth in death because of sin.

The reason this is important to understand is because there are those who suggest that when Paul says, "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God", he means to say that human beings will not be flesh and blood in their final resurrection state.

This could not be further from the truth, and in fact contradicts what a resurrection of human beings entails. If the same perishable body that is put into the ground comes out as an imperishable body then what kind of body will it be?

Well, Paul has already answered this question.

1 Corinthians 15:41-44 ⁴¹ There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. ⁴² So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable *body*, it is raised an imperishable *body*; ⁴³ it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴ it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual *body*.

The issue at hand is that these people who teach that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God are actually teaching that flesh and blood in the final resurrected state is not a resurrection back to flesh and blood.

And part of the reason they subscribe to this teaching is what we see in verse 44.

“It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual *body*.”

But as we saw last week Paul is not introducing a teaching that re-defines resurrection as something that is a hybrid between physical and spiritual, but is simply making the case that our present sin-filled, cursed bodies are not the bodies that will inherit the kingdom, but that our present perishable bodies will be raised in the power of the Spirit, as was Christ’s physical body, and will be established for eternity as bodies that are glorified and set apart for the new earth.

It begs the question from the advocates of a body that is spiritual but not physical, what is a spiritual body if it’s spiritual?

A body by definition is flesh and bone and blood. The difference between a natural body and a spiritual body is that one body dies and the other body lives forever because of the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ who has defeated death and will raise us up to live lives without death forever with Him.

To suggest that a spiritual body, (resurrection body), is not a flesh and bone body is to ignore Christ's very words about His own resurrected body.

Luke 24:39 ³⁹ "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, *for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.*"

All men will one day be resurrected back to a state of flesh and bone that will live forever.

Acts 24:15 there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

For those who have rejected Christ they will one day be resurrected to a physical state wherein they will suffer eternal condemnation. For those who have accepted Christ they will be resurrected to a physical state that will enjoy the blessings of the eternal kingdom of Christ.

It's really not any more complicated than that.

We have been spiritually raised up with Christ at conversion and our Lord Jesus will physically raise us on the last day at the last trumpet.

Ephesians 2:5-6 ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus,

This is the equivalent of a spiritual resurrection from death to life.

John 6:39 ³⁹ "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.

Our physical resurrection will result in flesh and blood people who will live on a real earth which will not be a non-earth, but a new earth.

God's plan for His people was established from eternity to be "people" for eternity.

2 Corinthians 6:16 ¹⁶ Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; *AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.*

God will walk among His people as Christ comes in that final day to bring us into His presence on the new earth as He dwells with us and we with Him forever.

Revelation 21:1-3 ^{NAU} Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, *the tabernacle of God is among men*, and He will dwell among them, and *they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them*,

Does that mean that in our resurrected bodies we will have all of our senses and desires and memories?

Absolutely. Why would we become less than human in our resurrected state than we were in our non-resurrected state? In fact, we will be more in all of these areas because they will no longer be affected by sin and the curse.

When we experience the new creation of God in our resurrected state will we have less of an appreciation for all that God has provided for us in the new earth?

Will the new earth be less glorious than the old earth? Will our sense of touch be less when we play with the lion and the lamb together as all creatures of the field will be restored to a paradise where no fear or anxiety exists between beast and human?

When Isaiah gave us a picture of that future kingdom he painted an interesting scene of the new earth.

Isaiah 11:6-7 ⁶ And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, And the leopard will lie down with the young goat, And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little boy will lead them. ⁷ Also the cow and the bear will graze, Their young will lie down together, And the lion will eat straw like the ox.

The new earth will be full of animals and people dwelling together in peace.

But will our resurrected bodies be able to smell and taste? Again, will we be less human in our new bodies in a resurrected state? Are we to spend eternity in our new bodies avoiding all of the fruit trees that will be part of the new Paradise?

Will food and drink be foreign to new resurrected bodies that are flesh and bone and blood and not need nourishment?

Our resurrected bodies will be perfect and glorious, but to suggest that human physical bodies, albeit resurrected, won't or can't assimilate food and drink again begs the question, was Adam and Eve's perfect sinless bodies meant to exist without food and drink?

Genesis 2:16 ¹⁶ The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely;

'Oh, but Adam and Eve weren't existing in resurrected bodies and therefore they needed food and drink to exist.'

Unless it has escaped our notice the entire reason for our redemption is to reverse what happened in the Garden before Adam sinned so as to restore Paradise with all of the privileges that they enjoyed before sin.

In other words, God is going to restore man back to that original condition of perfection which must necessarily come through resurrection since the body of sin cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

And what this means is that our new bodies will enjoy every aspect of being human in a perfect state of glory with our resurrected Savior who invites us to the supper of the Lamb.

And I might add that that supper is not meant to be a one-time event but an on-going fellowship with Christ is His presence forever.

It's interesting that when Jesus was part of a dinner fellowship where they were eating and drinking, it was brought up, in light of that meal, that there would be a day when even in the future kingdom of God to come there would still be meals to be enjoyed by those who were resurrected.

Luke 14:12-15 ¹² And He also went on to say to the one who had invited Him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and *that* will be your repayment. ¹³ "But when you give a reception, invite *the* poor, *the* crippled, *the* lame, *the* blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed, since they do not have *the means* to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." ¹⁵ When one of those who were

reclining *at the table* with Him heard this, he said to Him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!"

What's interesting about that passage is that nowhere does Jesus correct this statement about eating bread in the kingdom of God, but our Lord actually plays off of that statement to further make His point regarding the kingdom as He gives another parable about another meal.

I don't know why it is so hard for people to accept the fact that our resurrected bodies are the reversal to the curse as we are destined to spend eternity on the new earth where righteousness dwells, but in no way eliminates what it means to be human along with the entire human experience including food and drink and cool autumn days with friends around a campfire telling stories as we sip our favorite beverages declaring the glory of God.

Resurrection has a meaning as it is a means to an end. And that end is to dwell with our risen Savior in a resurrected universe. The new heavens and the new earth are part of the Kingdom of God that our resurrected Savior purchased for us as an eternal inheritance.

And our Lord's delight will be to share it with us.

I continue to come back to that promise made to us in the book of Revelation that Peter spoke of in his second letter regarding the new heavens and new earth.

2 Peter 3:13 ¹³ But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

Revelation 21:1-5 ^{NAU} Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, ⁴ and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." ⁵ And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."

This is the culmination of that promise that was made to Adam and Eve; two very real human beings made in a perfect state but who

sinned against their Creator. That promise from God was to reestablish the human-God relationship through the Messiah who would make it all possible.

And Jesus Christ suffered the penalty that we deserve as He bore our sin and guilt upon the cross, but who rose victoriously establishing what it means to be a human being in a once again perfect, and this time, glorified resurrected state.

Present sin-filled, cursed flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God but flesh and blood resurrected from the dead can and will and this is our hope in Christ.

We have not been called out by Christ to live like mere men of the world, but men and women of the Kingdom of God. That's an awesome place to live, but along with that comes an awesome responsibility to represent our King and Savior in this present world as we submit to the Spirit of God in love and obedience. Remember who you are in Christ.

1PE 2:9 "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."