

Session 17 Summary and Review

The First Adam and the Last Adam - 1 Corinthians 15 and the Resurrection

We are in 1 Corinthians 15 today. We've been studying the Old Testament, but whenever the New Testament directly refers back to Adam, we land there. And here Paul talks about the resurrection. There are some deeply encouraging things in this chapter.

Before moving into the text, I want to briefly revisit where we were last time in Romans 5. There we looked at the comparison between the first Adam and Christ, the last Adam. Adam's single act of disobedience brought condemnation to all humanity. Christ's one act of righteousness — his death and resurrection — brought justification.

What struck me again is how Paul emphasizes the "much more." Adam's one sin brought judgment. Christ's one act overcomes not just one sin, but the accumulated weight of many sins. This is not a proportional response — many sins, many punishments — but a divine reversal. Many sins, one tremendous gift of righteousness. That is the superabundance of grace.

Now Paul develops that further in 1 Corinthians 15.

Christ the First Fruits

Verse 20 says:

"But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep."

"First fruits" is Old Testament language. The first part of the harvest was dedicated to the Lord. The firstborn animals, the first portion of crops — they belonged to Him. So when Paul calls Christ the "first fruits," he is saying Christ is the beginning of a greater harvest to follow.

Others were raised in Scripture — Lazarus, for example — but they died again. Christ is different. His resurrection is the beginning of something permanent.

Verse 21 continues:

"For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead."

A man brought the problem into the world. A man had to solve it. That is why it was necessary for God the Son to become truly human. Not a mystical appearance. Not a spirit

wandering around. A real man — with bones, blood, hunger, fatigue. Fully man, even while fully God.

Death came by a man. Resurrection also comes by a man.

In Adam or In Christ

Verse 22:

“For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.”

That sounds sweeping until verse 23 clarifies:

“But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming.”

Every human being is in one of two camps. Either you are in Adam, or you are in Christ.

Adam is the head of a race. Christ is the head of a race.

If you are in Adam, you share in his guilt and death. That is what we call original sin. A child is born already in Adam. He hasn’t done anything yet, but he belongs to that fallen line.

To be saved is to be removed from Adam and placed into Christ. You are transferred from one head to another. From one genealogy to another. From death to life.

Everyone in Adam dies. Everyone in Christ will be made alive.

There is also an order. Christ first. Then those who belong to Him at His coming. Then comes the end.

The End and the Final Enemy

Verse 24 says:

“Then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.”

There is coming a point when every other authority will be abolished. No more subrulers. No more competing powers. All enemies placed under Christ’s feet.

Verse 26 tells us the last enemy to be abolished is death.

That is the final enemy. And it too will be under His feet.

Paul makes an important clarification in verse 27. When he says all things are subjected to Christ, he does not mean the Father is subjected. The One who puts all things under Christ is not Himself put under Christ. The Father remains supreme.

Then in verse 28, when everything is subjected, the Son Himself will be subjected to the Father so that God may be all in all. Christ accomplishes redemption. He completes the work. And when it is fully brought to its end in history, the kingdom is handed over, the purpose fulfilled.

On the cross He said, "It is finished." In time, that finished work unfolds until all is complete.

What Kind of Body?

Beginning in verse 35, Paul anticipates the question:

"How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?"

His first answer is blunt:

"You fool!"

In other words, think about it. Look at what God has already made.

He points to seeds. You plant a kernel of corn. You do not plant a full stalk. What you sow is not the body that will be. The seed goes into the ground. It dies. What comes up is different in form, yet connected to what was planted.

Different seeds produce different bodies. Corn produces corn. Lima beans produce lima beans. Each has its own body.

Then he moves to animals — men, beasts, birds, fish — all different. Then to the heavens — sun, moon, stars — each with its own glory.

And then comes the conclusion:

"So also is the resurrection of the dead."

It is sown a corruptible body. It is raised an incorruptible body.

It is sown in dishonor. It is raised in glory.

It is sown in weakness. It is raised in power.

It is sown a natural body. It is raised a spiritual body.

“Spiritual” does not mean ghostly. It is a real body. Just as real as the natural body, but of a different order.

If there is a natural body — and there is — then there is also a spiritual body.

The First Man and the Last Adam

Now Adam comes back into view.

“The first man, Adam, became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.”

Adam received life. Christ gives life.

However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. Adam came first. He was from the earth, made from dust. Earthy. The second man is from heaven.

As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy. As is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly.

Just as surely as we have borne the image of the earthy — and we all have — we will also bear the image of the heavenly.

That is the promise.

We Must Be Changed

Verse 50 makes it clear:

“Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.”

This present body cannot go into that kingdom unchanged.

“Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed.”

Whether through death and burial or at Christ’s coming, change is required. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed.

This corruptible must put on the incorruptible. This mortal must put on immortality.

Then it will be fulfilled:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

“O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”

A Picture That Helped Me See It

The first time this truly settled into my thinking was at my mother's funeral. At the graveside, the pastor called the children forward and explained this passage to them.

He said, Grandma is like a seed.

When you plant corn, the plant does not come up somewhere else. It comes up where you planted the seed.

So when Grandma is buried here, and the resurrection happens, her new body comes up here — where the seed was planted.

That picture stayed with me. The continuity. The connection. What is sown is what God raises — transformed, glorified, incorruptible.

We were in a desperate situation because of what Adam did. Earthly. Corruptible. Weak.

But we are in a glorious situation because of what Christ has done. Heavenly. Incorruptible. Powerful.

Adam brought earthliness. Christ brings heaven.

And just as surely as we bear the image of the earthy, we will bear the image of the heavenly.

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