

1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 15

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Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, (2) by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you [It’s true, of course, that we must, continue to hold fast the word of the gospel (in faith), which includes living in line with the truth of the gospel as well as holding correct doctrine. However, that isn’t the primary issue the apostle Paul is dealing with here; he assumes (at least for the sake of discussion) that they are holding fast the gospel; the *if* clause is a class-one condition in the Greek (assumed to be true). What Paul is getting at here, as the following words show, is the issue whether the gospel they had received from Paul is true (not that Paul ever doubted it).], **unless you believed in vain.** [Compare “if Christ has not been raised...your faith...is vain” (15:14) and “your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins” (15:17). As Paul will go on to show, they would have believed in vain if there is no resurrection of the dead. Throughout this chapter Paul deals with the resurrection because some in the church at Corinth were denying the resurrection of the body. If they are right, Paul says, then the gospel isn’t true, and we have believed in vain. Paul, of course, wasn’t doubting the resurrection; he was trying to wake up some Corinthians to the seriousness of their unappreciated modification of the gospel. God doesn’t need any help!

Some Corinthians were denying the resurrection of the body, but they probably would have accused Paul of setting up a straw man in this chapter, easy to knock over. They probably would have said they believed in eternal glory all right but they just didn’t believe in a literal resurrection of the body. From their point of view, the idea of a resurrected body was a negative; it sounded like a Jewish myth that was beneath their dignity, being cultured Greeks (cf. Acts 17:32); they undoubtedly looked forward to being totally free from a body in the eternal age to come. It’s probably true that Paul didn’t give their viewpoint a fair bearing—he knew that it was wrong. The Corinthians had no right to modify the gospel, as it was given by Christ to Paul (cf., e.g., Gal. 1:11, 12), to make it better fit their view of things. We had better just stick with God’s view of things, the truth. Their idea fit a common world view of that day that physical matter, including the body, is evil. However, physical matter and the body are not evil in themselves, having been created by God. They wanted to be once for all free from this evil. Their contempt for a resurrected body probably pictured this body being essentially the equivalent of the body as it exists in this age. (Some ancient Jewish writings, including the Talmud, show that this was a common viewpoint among the Jews.) In 1 Cor. 15:35-54 Paul deals with the

glorious transformation of the present body that will take place to make it a fit body for eternal, heavenly glory.

They probably said they believed in the resurrection, but that is was strictly a spiritual resurrection. It's true, of course, that we have already experienced a spiritual resurrection as born-again Christians (cf., e.g., Rom. 6:4-11; Eph. 2:5, 6; and Col. 2:12, 13). In 2 Tim. 2:17, 18 Paul mentions two Christian leaders by name "who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place" thereby apparently denying the future resurrection of the body.

Based on what Paul says in this chapter, it seems his opponents did not deny the resurrection of Jesus' body, but they probably thought of His body being different than ours; His was a unique case. (Cf., e.g., 1 John 4:2, where John had to combat the Gnostic denial that Jesus really "came in the flesh." Paul could also have mentioned that others besides Jesus had been resurrected bodily right after His resurrection and had appeared to many [see Matt. 27:52, 53].) It would have been very difficult for Christians to deny the bodily resurrection of Christ with that empty tomb, with all those witnesses of His resurrection (see 1 Cor. 15:5-8), and with His resurrection being so emphasized in the gospel. I might add that the disciples could touch Him after His resurrection (Matt. 28:9; Luke 24:36-40) and He ate with His resurrected body (Luke 24:41-43).] **(3) For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, (4) and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures** [As I mentioned, Paul received the gospel from Christ; it's also true that he undoubtedly received much from others, like Peter (cf. Gal. 1:18). It's significant that the gospel Paul preached was essentially the same as the gospel preached by the other apostles. Paul's gospel added some revelation to that given by the twelve (especially regarding God's salvation plans for the Gentiles, since he was the apostle to the Gentiles [Gal. 2:7, 9]), but he was in total agreement with them on the basics of the gospel, including the items listed here in 15:3, 4, and on the future resurrection of the body.

Significantly, Paul had the Old Testament Scriptures to substantiate his gospel. On Christ's (atoning) death and resurrection, see Isa. 52:12-53:12; Luke 24:25-35; Acts 17:2, 3; and 26:22, 23. On His atoning death, see 1 Pet. 2:24, 25 (these verses quote from and build on Isa. 53:4-12); Acts 8:32-35 (Acts 8:32, 33 quote Isa. 53:7, 8). On His burial, see Isa. 53:9. On His resurrection, see Psalm 16:8-11 with Acts 2:22-32. Regarding His being raised on the third day, cf. Hos. 6:2; Matt. 12:39, 40 with Jonah 1:17; John 2:18-22; Matt. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Luke 9:22; 18:33; 24:7; 24:46; and Acts 10:40. I agree with the standard viewpoint that Jesus was crucified and buried on Friday and raised early Sunday morning, on the third day.

Matthew 12:39, 40 with Jonah 1:17 are explained by D. A. Carson, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 8, edited by F. E. Gaebelin [Zondervan, 1984], page 296: "...if the normal sequence of Passion Week [speaking of the standard viewpoint I just mentioned] is correct... Jesus was in the tomb only about thirty-six hours. Since they included parts of three days, by Jewish reckoning Jesus was buried 'three days' or, to put it another way, he rose 'on the third day' (Matt. 16:21). ... In rabbinical thought a day and a night make an *onah* [a full day], and a part of an *onah* is as the whole (cf. ... Esth. 4:16; 5:1). Thus according to Jewish tradition, 'three days and three nights' need mean no more than 'three days' or any combination of any part of three separate days."], **(5) and that He appeared to Cephas** [Paul normally refers to Peter by his Aramaic name Cephas. (See John 1:42; Gal. 2:7-9.) Compare Luke 24:13-35, especially 24:34; these verses also mention Jesus'

appearance to the two men on the road to Emmaus, not mentioned by Paul here. Paul also doesn't mention Jesus' appearance to Mary Magdalene (John 20:11-18; Mark 16:9) and to the women (Matt. 28:1-10). The apostles were key witnesses of Christ's resurrection (cf. Acts 1:22).], **then to the twelve** [Cf. Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36; and John 20:19.], **(6) After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep;** **(7) then He appeared to James** [This is James a brother of the Lord Jesus. Cf., e.g., Mark 6:3; Acts 12:17; Gal. 1:19; and 2:9, 12. In Gal. 1:19 Paul calls James an apostle; he wasn't one of the twelve.], **then to all the apostles** [Cf. Luke 24:50-52; John 20:26; and Acts 1:3-12.]; **(8) and last of all, as it were to one untimely born** [The NIV has, "as to one abnormally born." Paul is alluding to the circumstances of his conversion; he met the Lord Jesus while on his way to Damascus to persecute some more of His people. Cf. Acts 9:1-22; 22:3-21; 26:9-20; and 1 Cor. 9:1.], **He appeared to me also. (9) For I am the least of the apostles, who am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.** [Cf. 1 Tim. 1:12-16.] **(10) But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.** [Cf., e.g., 2 Cor. 3:5, 6; Eph. 3:1-13. The fact that Paul's ministry (and life) was effective by God's grace/Spirit, and the fact that God must receive all the glory, doesn't mean that Paul (and all Christians) didn't have a necessary role to play, as he cooperated with God's grace/Spirit through faith. Cf. Phil. 2:12, 13.] **(11) Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed. (12) 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? (13) But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; (14) and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. (15) Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we witnessed against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. (16) For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; (17) and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.** [As discussed above, Paul's opponents would probably have said they believed Jesus, being a unique case, was resurrected, but that they could not accept the idea of a bodily resurrection of Christians. However, as these verses show, Paul will have none of this compromise. Either the gospel is true in its entirety, or it's false, and we're still in our sins.] **(18) Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.** [In other words, if the gospel isn't true, those Christians who have died will not be resurrected to eternal glory when Christ returns; they have perished.] **(19) If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.** [The hope of Christians is to be resurrected to eternal glory when Christ returns (cf., e.g., Col. 1:5, 27; 3:4; Phil. 3:20, 21). (At death true Christians go to heaven [cf. 2 Cor. 5:1, 8; Phil. 1:21, 23; 1 Thess. 4:14-16], but it is heaven in a preliminary sense; it is a preliminary state that precedes the resurrection and the glory reserved for the age to come.) If we were to have this hope in Christ throughout this present life and then die and find out that our hope was based on a lie (which isn't going to happen, as Paul can assure his readers), then "we are of all men most to be pitied." Paul's point is that if the Corinthians who were denying the bodily resurrection were right, then this would be the result.] **(20) But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.** [The Lord Jesus Christ was the first man (He became a man, but He is much more than just a man) to leave death behind and be harvested into God's eternal kingdom with a glorified body. He is "the first fruits" of the coming harvest. (There is widespread agreement that Jesus was raised on the

very day “the sheaf of the first fruits of [the agricultural] harvest” was presented before the Lord. See Lev. 23:10, 11. The “first fruits” look forward to and consecrate the harvest to come.) Then, as 1 Cor. 15:23 shows, at the time of Christ’s second coming, His people (all true believers, which includes all the believers from old-covenant days and all true Christians) will be harvested into the glory of God’s kingdom. All believers who have died will be resurrected, and those Christians still living on the earth when He comes will be transformed (cf. 1 Cor. 15:50-52; 1 Thess. 4:13-17). (As I mentioned, Matt. 27:52, 53 show that a select number of old-covenant saints received resurrection bodies shortly after the Lord Jesus was resurrected.) The verse we are studying calls Jesus “the first fruits of those who are asleep”; Col. 1:18 and Rev. 1:5 call Him “the first-born of/from the dead.” He is the first man to be born into the fulness of eternal life with a glorified body, a body that will never taste death again. We will follow Him in this birth at the time of His return. Revelation 12:5 is a key verse that speaks of this end-time birth of God’s people. (This verse is discussed in my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture*, on pages 314-316. Three other verses that speak of this same birth are Psalm 2:7; Isa. 66:7; and Mic. 5:3. These verses are discussed in some detail in the same book; separate chapters are devoted to Psalm 2; Isa. 66:1-8; and Micah 4:9-5:6.) On this all-important birth (and life) by the Spirit, also see below under 1 Cor. 15:44, 45, including the discussion of John 3:5, 6.] **(21) For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead.** [Cf. Rom. 5:12-21; 6:5; Eph. 1:19-2:10; Phil. 3:10-14; Col. 3:1-4; and I Peter 1:3-13. Christians are united with Christ in His death, burial, resurrection, ascension, etc. In Christ we are taken to a place much higher than what Adam had before the fall (cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 15:44-50). In 1 Cor. 15:45 Christ is called “the last Adam.”] **(22) For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.** [All true believers will be caught up into the fulness of eternal life when Christ returns. It’s also true that Christians are “made alive” at conversion (as the references cited under 15:21 confirm), but the fulness of eternal life (including most of the glory) is reserved for the age to come. In the interpretation of these verses given so far, it has been assumed that “all” in “all shall be made alive” is limited to believers. This is reasonable, and this is a very common interpretation of these words. Paul’s Rom. 5:18 fits this viewpoint, “So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness [referring to Christ’s atoning death] there resulted justification of life to all men.” It’s clear (in context with Rom. 5:17, 19) that “all men” in 5:18 is limited to those who receive God’s grace in Christ (by faith).

There is, however, another way to understand the last words of 1 Cor. 15:21 (“the resurrection of the dead”) and the last words of 15:22 (“so also in Christ all shall be made alive”), and I somewhat prefer this other interpretation. (Even if we were to go a little beyond what Paul intended with this other interpretation, it’s still Biblical (and true), and it will be worth our time to consider it. Whether we accept the one interpretation, or the other, doesn’t affect the overall interpretation of this chapter or the Bible’s teaching on the end times.) It seems preferable to understand “all shall be made alive” to refer to all mankind, and this can be done if we understand “made alive” here to speak of the resurrection of all mankind, not just the resurrection of believers. Though I have found that many Christians don’t know this, it’s clear that all men, not just believers, will eventually be resurrected (cf., e.g., John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15 [This verse is significant in that the apostle Paul says, “there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.”]; Luke 14:14; and Rev. 20:5). John 5:28, 29 are especially relevant as a reference in that all the dead (not just the believers) will hear the voice of the Son of God

and be resurrected. Revelation 20:5 is especially relevant because it speaks of “the rest of the dead” (which refers to those not made alive/resurrected in the first resurrection, which will be completed by the time the millennium begins) coming to life at the end of the millennium; their coming to life (their living) speaks of their resurrection. The next four verses (1 Cor. 15:23-26) fit better with the idea that “all shall be made alive” here in 1 Cor. 15:22 speaks of all mankind.] **(23) But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming** [The words “each in his own order,” fit better with the idea that Paul was referring to all mankind being made alive/resurrected in 15:21, 22. With this fuller viewpoint, the “order(s)” include a third major order after the resurrections of Christ and of “those who are Christ’s at His coming,” that is, the resurrection of the rest of the dead at the end of the millennium. Paul doesn’t specifically mention this third order here in chapter 15 (his primary topic throughout this entire chapter is the resurrection of believers), but there is further rather strong evidence for this viewpoint in 15:26, which speaks of the last enemy death being abolished. The last enemy death can’t be abolished until all mankind has been raised from the dead (made alive). This is confirmed by Rev. 20:13, 14; we see the resurrection of the rest of the dead in 20:13 (cf. 20:5), then in 20:14 we are told that death and Hades (the abode of the dead) are cast into the lake of fire.

We have already discussed the meaning of the resurrection/transformation of “those who are Christ’s at His coming,” but let’s consider two more details. First, *what about the resurrection (and rapture) of the two witnesses of Rev. 11:11, 12?* I consider the resurrection (and rapture) of the two witnesses to be part of the resurrection/transformation and rapture of all believers that will take place at the mid-week (right in the middle of Daniel’s 70th week) return of Christ with the clouds of heaven. Their resurrection and rapture could precede the resurrection and rapture of the rest of God’s people by a very short period of time, or it could be simultaneous with it. Second, *many will be born again after the rapture of the church.* This multitude, which can be called the end-time remnant of Israel (though it undoubtedly includes many Gentiles) will go through three and one-half very difficult years, and there will be many martyrs for Christ. At the end of this period (at the end of Daniel’s 70th week), all the believers who have been martyred during the second three and one-half years will be resurrected (Rev. 20:4), and (I assume that) those believers still alive will be transformed; together they will begin their never-ending reign in glory with those already resurrected/transformed in the middle of the seven-year period. (See, e.g., Rev. 12:13-17; 13:5-17 [On these verses, see under Revelation chapters 12 and 13 in *The Mid-Week Rapture.*]; and Rev. 20:4 [On this verse, see pages 72, 73 in *The Mid-Week Rapture.* Include the section there titled, “A More Detailed Look at Those Who Will Feign with the Lord Jesus Christ and the Time They Will Begin to Reign.”]), **(24) then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. (25) For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.** [“The end” cannot come until Christ has returned and subdued all His enemies in His end-time reign (reigning includes judging). Revelation 11:17 and 12:10 are two key verses that speak of this end-time reign of Christ that will begin in the middle of Daniel’s 70th week. The Lord Jesus has all authority now (e.g., Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:20-23), but He is waiting for the Father’s time to return to subdue His enemies. (Throughout this age He is subduing the hearts of those who submit to the gospel in faith [cf. Rev. 6:2].) As I mentioned, the last enemy to be subjugated will be death, and we know, based on Rev. 20:14, that death will not be abolished until after the millennium,

after the great-white-throne judgment of Rev. 20:11-15. (As I mentioned, Paul didn't have the benefit of having the book of Revelation, which was written some thirty years after his death. I doubt that he knew some of the end-time details that we learn from Revelation.)

Psalm 110 is an important reference on Christ's coming rule/reign that will subdue His enemies. Psalm 110:1 speaks of His "enemies being made a footstool for [His] feet." (Cf. Heb. 10:13.) This significant psalm is discussed in chapter 19 of *The Mid-Week Rapture*. Psalm 8, especially verse 6 (this verse is quoted in 1 Cor. 15:27), is another important reference dealing with Christ's enemies being put under His feet. On Psalm 8, see pages 76-80 in *The Mid-Week Rapture*. Also see Eph. 1:22, which also quotes from Psalm 8:6.] **(26) The last enemy that will be abolished is death.** [See under 1 Cor. 15:23.] **(27) For HE [God the Father] HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS [Christ's] FEET. But when He [I would translate "when it says" with the NIV; "it" refers to the verse of the Old Testament that is quoted (Psalm 8:6).] says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He [God the Father] is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him [Christ]. [Hebrews 2:5-11, which quote Psalm 8:4-6, show that Christ's people will ultimately be included with Christ in this reign. On Heb. 2:5-11, see pages 78-80 of *The Mid-Week Rapture*.] **(28) And when all things are subjected to Him [Christ's work of saving and judging will be finished.], then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all.** [These two verses emphasize the subordination of God the Son to God the Father, but lest we go too far and miss the balance here, see, e.g., Rev. 21:22, 23 and 22:3, verses that help demonstrate the exalted role God the Son will have with God the Father in the glorious, eternal New Jerusalem. Revelation 22:3-5 are key verses that show the glorious, never-ending reign of true Israel with God the Father and God the Son.] **(29) Otherwise, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them?** [The apostle refers to a practice that was evidently done on occasion in the church at Corinth (baptism for the dead) to further argue for the need to believe in the resurrection. The Bible doesn't mention this practice anywhere else. Paul wasn't necessarily in favor of this practice, but it doesn't seem that he forbade it. It certainly isn't a practice that Christians are required to do, and I'm not aware of any Christians doing it.**

What is the baptism for the dead? There have been many answers given to this question, but there's only one that seems satisfactory to me, and it's the most common answer. I'll give an illustration to show how this probably worked. Let's say there was a man who had been actively attending the church at Corinth for several months. He had been zealously studying the gospel, and everyone in the church was impressed with his sincerity in submitting to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. However, before being baptized in water, this man lost his life when his ship was destroyed in a storm in the Mediterranean Sea. In a case like this (at least in some such cases at Corinth), someone (perhaps a relative or a close friend in the church) was baptized in his place, by proxy. (Many have heard of a person being prayed for in the place of another person not present, by proxy.) There would surely have been very definite limits on who qualified for this baptism by proxy, for example, those who were known to be believers.

You couldn't begin to understand how a practice like this could have arisen if, like many Christians today, you have a very low view of water baptism. It's clear to me that the Bible teaches a much higher view of baptism than that held by many Christians today. I'm not bringing this up because I think this is one of the biggest problems in the Body of Christ. (I believe we have much greater problems to deal with in the Body of Christ,

especially dealing with the basic truths of the gospel and the need to live in God's will—in righteousness and holiness—by grace/the Spirit through faith.) Furthermore, I'm not bringing up water baptism because of some special interest in this topic, or because of some special experience I've had; I'm not emotionally involved regarding this topic, and I'm not obligated to any particular viewpoint (we are obligated to God and His truth). I'm bringing it up strictly based on what the Bible seems to rather clearly say on this topic. I'm certainly not suggesting, nor do I believe, that people can't be saved or sanctified apart from water baptism. God has been very generous with His people (in blessing us in spite of our errors), but that's no excuse to maintain our viewpoints when they're wrong/when they don't line up with the balanced truth of the Bible. The more we do things God's way, the more He'll be glorified, His will will be accomplished in the church, the more He can bless us and use us, and the more we can unite around the balanced truth.

It seems that many have formed their view of water baptism mostly in reaction to someone else who was out of balance in a different direction. We need the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches in this area, as in every area. The Bible mentions forgiveness/washing away of sins at water baptism (Acts 2:38, 22:16); it mentions becoming united with Christ in baptism, including being united with Him in His death on the cross (cf. Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3); He died an atoning death in our place; we are to die to sin and to the old man in water baptism, and the old man is to be buried (Rom. 6:3, 4; Col. 2:11, 12); John 3:5 seems to speak of water baptism as a preliminary to being born of the Spirit [I believe the words "born of water" in John 3:5 refer to water baptism, which was quite prominent in that setting. Not only was John the Baptist baptizing (even Jesus Christ was baptized by him), but Jesus (through His disciples) was also baptizing (John 1:25-34; 3:22-26; 4:1, 2). The baptism of John 3:5 is a baptism of repentance and faith. Regarding the Biblical pattern that the life-giving, sanctifying, gift-dispensing Spirit typically comes to believers immediately after, and in close association with, water baptism, see pages 126, 127 in my book *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*, including the Notes. This reference also discusses Titus 3:5, another verse that apparently views water baptism as a preliminary to receiving the Spirit (not that there isn't room for exceptions to this pattern, cf. Acts 10:44-48).]; and 1 Pet. 3:21 even speaks of baptism saving us. As I mentioned, I'm not suggesting that these things (like forgiveness, dying to the old man, etc.) can't be received apart from water baptism, but baptism seems to be the most appropriate (Biblical) occasion to complete these transactions.

I believe it's necessary for us to understand that water baptism is meaningful and effective only if it's accompanied by the following indispensable things: We must hear the gospel and understand it (we must at least understand the basics of the gospel); we must repent and submit to the gospel (and God Himself) in faith; and we must have all the necessary work of the Holy Spirit (like His drawing, convicting, revealing, regenerating, and sanctifying work). Without these things water baptism is nothing more than another dead ritual. Some other verses to consider on water baptism are Matt. 3:1-12, 13-17; 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:41; 8:36-39; 9:18; 10:47, 48; 19:5; and Eph. 4:5.] **(30) Why are we** ["We" includes those like Silas and Timothy who traveled and ministered with Paul.] **also in danger every hour? (31) I protest, brethren, by the boasting in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.** [I believe the translation of the NIV better communicates what Paul said here: "I die every day [or, I die daily]—I mean that brothers—just as surely as I glory over you [or, boast in you] in Christ Jesus our Lord." Paul's dying daily refers to the many difficult trials he experienced in the course of his

Christian life and ministry. See 1 Cor. 15:30, 32; 4:9-13; 9:19-27; 2 Cor. 1:3-11; 4:7-18; and 11:23-12:10. Paul's Christian life and ministry make absolutely no sense, he says, if there's no resurrection.] **(32) If from human motives** [I prefer the NIV's "for merely human reasons." In other words, if the gospel isn't true, then Paul didn't really do these things for God, and it's all done in vain.] **I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus** [Paul was in Ephesus when he wrote this epistle (cf. 1 Cor. 16:8). We don't know exactly what Paul was referring to here regarding his fighting with wild beasts, nor do we have to know (his readers undoubtedly knew more of the details), but I assume (in agreement with most commentators) he was using figurative language to speak of fierce opposition coming from some men. See 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 1:8-10 (Ephesus was in the Roman province of "Asia," which is mentioned in 2 Cor. 1:8).], **what does it profit me? If the dead are not raised, LET US EAT AND DRINK, FOR TOMORROW WE DIE. (33) Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."** **(34) Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning; for some have no knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.** [A primary sin Paul was concerned with was the denial of the resurrection of the body; however, it's probably also true that the same people who were spreading this serious doctrinal error were living in sin and corrupting the morals of those who associated with them. (Bad doctrine often leads to sinful living, and the heresy of denying the resurrection of the body had great potential for excusing, or explaining away, sinfulness, perhaps especially sins associated with the body.) Paul exhorts the church at Corinth to stop listening to those "Christians" who don't know what they're talking about. Some of them may have been born-again Christians, but that's no guarantee they know what they're talking about. Some ministers are self-appointed; they're not from God (cf., e.g., 2 Cor. 11:13-15). We must be very careful who we listen to. We must test ministers by what they say (cf. 1 John 4:1-6), and we must test them by the way they live (cf. Matt. 7:15-20). True righteousness comes from God, based on faith in the truth of the gospel.] **(35) But someone will say, "How are the dead raised?** [The apostle doesn't spend much time answering this first question. In 15:36-38 he gives an illustration that helps demonstrate that death, rather than frustrating God's resurrection plan, fits right in with His plan. How are the dead raised? By God's plan and power.] **And with what kind of body do they come?"** [Throughout much of the rest of this chapter, Paul answers this question to some extent, but he doesn't give us all the answers. For one thing, it's not possible for us to fully understand the glory of the age to come while still living in this age, even though we're born again. Those who rejected the doctrine of the resurrection undoubtedly thought in terms of us having essentially the same physical body after the resurrection (see under 15:2). This viewpoint didn't take into account the transformation/glorification of the resurrected body (of believers); Paul emphasizes this transformation/glorification in the following verses.] **(36) You fool! That which you sow does not come to life** [I prefer the translation "is not made alive." This translation better emphasizes the important fact that God makes it alive. The KJV has, "is not quickened."] **unless it dies; (37) and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else. (38) But God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own.** [As 15:37 shows, the "body" in 15:38 refers to the plant (or a tree, etc.) that God brings forth after the sowing (planting) of the seed. There's quite a difference between the seed and the plant. For one thing, this illustration helps demonstrate the difference between the body we have in this life compared with the transformed, glorified resurrection body.] **(39) All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts** [The NIV has

“animals.” Under the Greek noun (*ktenos*), the BAGD Greek Lexicon has, “animal, i.e. domesticated animal, pet, pack-animal, animal, used for riding.”], **and another flesh of birds, and another of fish.** [There are different types of seeds, and there are different types of “flesh.” This verse further demonstrates the diversity in God’s creation. Allow me to do a little speculation: Several times I have been asked whether our pets will make it to heaven. This question isn’t of supreme importance, and I don’t believe we have enough information to answer this question with any assurance; however, Paul’s words here could be understood to include the idea that animals, birds, and fish will have a resurrected/transformed existence in the glorified age to come. I won’t be surprised if it’s true, at least for some animals, etc. I’ll be satisfied with God’s plan regarding this matter, and every other matter. Anyway, it seems clear that there will be animals in the millennial kingdom (Isa. 11:6-9; 65:25), and I don’t know of any reason why such a state should end when the eternal state, with its new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21:1-22:5), begins after the great-white-throne judgment of Rev. 20:11-15 at the end of the millennium. For one thing, we need not limit these verses in Isaiah to the millennial kingdom.] **(40) There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another. (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.** [Paul has already mentioned that earthly bodies differ from one another (15:39), now he mentions that the same thing is true for heavenly bodies. I assume Paul thinks of the present sun, moon, and stars as representative of “heavenly bodies” (15:40). (The same Greek adjective used for heavenly in 15:40 is also used for heavenly in 15:48, 49. It should be pointed out, however, that the glory of the sun, moon, and stars isn’t perfect for an illustration. For one thing, the sun, moon, and stars are considered part of the second heaven, not the third heaven, where God dwells [cf. 2 Cor. 12:2]. More significant is the fact that the present heaven and earth, which includes the present sun, moon, and stars, are destined to pass away to make room for God’s new heaven and new earth [cf. 2 Pet. 3:10-12; Rev. 21:1].) I assume the elements (the matter), including those of which our glorified bodies will consist in the New Jerusalem, will be quite different than the physical elements of this present world (including those of which the present sun, moon, and stars consist). The glory of our present earthly bodies (and especially after the fall of man and the resultant curse on the earth) is very small in comparison with the glory of our glorified, heavenly bodies. When Paul speaks of the glory of the sun, moon, and stars, he is speaking (at least in part) of their radiance, brilliance. (That’s a common use of “glory” in the New Testament.) However, when we speak of the glory that awaits us in heaven, we mean much more than radiance, brilliance. On our future glory, cf., e.g., John 17:5, 21-24; Rom. 8:18-30; 1 Cor. 2:7-9; 2 Cor. 3:18; 4:17, 18; Eph. 1:18; Phil. 3:20, 21; Col. 1:27; 3:1-4; 2 Thess. 2:14; Heb. 2:10; 1 Pet. 1:7; and 5:1, 4, 10. The fact that Paul mentioned that “star differs from star in glory” fits the idea that Christians will differ from one another in glory (including differing in authority) in the age to come (cf., e.g., Dan. 12:3; Matt. 13:43; 25:21, 23; Luke 19:17, 19; 1 Cor. 3:8, 12-15; and Rev. 22:12.) **(42) So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown** [Based on the use of “sow” in 15:36, 37, the sowing here undoubtedly refers to burial (like planting a seed).] a perishable body [The KJV has, “It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption.” Since the fall man’s body has been perishable. I’ll quote part of what C. K. Barrett says under this verse in his commentary on 1 Corinthians (Harper and Row, 1968): “Corruption is an evil power, by which the world is dominated in the old age (Rom. 8:21). It affects not only human life, but the whole of creation. Its dominion will be ended in the age to come, at the beginning

of which the resurrection takes place. Thus Paul's point is not simply that we shall have a new body, no longer subject to change and decay, but that the new body will be appropriate to the new age in which God, having reasserted his sovereignty, is all in all (15:28).”], **it is raised an imperishable body**; **(43) it is sown in dishonor** [The dishonor, which derives from sin, includes the perishableness.], **it is raised in glory** [Cf., e.g., Phil. 3:21; Col. 1:27; 3:4. The eternal glory reserved in heaven for us (cf. 1 Pet. 1:3-9) includes the glorification of the body, but the glory extends to every aspect of our heavenly existence.]; **it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power** [Cf. 1 Cor. 6:14; Eph. 1:19-21; Phil. 3:20, 21. It's clear that the Spirit is directly involved in the resurrection (cf., e.g., Rom. 8:11).]; **(44) it is sown a natural** [The Greek adjective translated “natural” here is *psuchikos*; it was derived from the noun *psuche*, which is normally translated “soul” or “life.” Note that *psuche* (soul) is used in 1 Cor. 15:45. There undoubtedly is a linkage intended between *psuchikos* in 15:44 and *psuche* in 15:45, even as there is between spiritual (*pneumatikos*) in 15:44 and spirit (*pneuma*) in 15:45. The NASB translates *psuche* as life/lives forty-three times. (It's translated as soul(s) forty-seven times.) Essentially every one of these uses (where *psuche* is translated life/lives) has to do with life in this world; this life is to be contrasted with life by the Spirit (which we have as horn-again Christians), and much more so it is to be contrasted with eternal life in glory/heaven. (which also derives from the Spirit).

The adjective *pneumatikos*, which was derived from *pneuma* (Spirit, spirit), is normally translated “spiritual” in the New Testament. It is typically related to work of the Spirit. For example, it is used of spiritual Christians, that is, those who live by the Spirit, as contrasted with those who are fleshly/soulish. (All Christians are enabled, and required, to be spiritual, but it doesn't always happen; we're not automatically spiritual—we must cooperate with the Spirit through faith.) The adjective is also used of gifts/things of the Spirit.

I'll quote from C. K. Barrett (see under 15:42) on the meaning of spiritual in this verse: “Spiritual does not describe a higher aspect of man's life [that is, it does not refer to man's spirit]; the noun spirit (*pneuma*) on which it [spiritual] is based refers to the Spirit of God, and the spiritual body is the new body, animated by the Spirit of God, with which the same man will be clothed and equipped in the age to come, which he reaches (supposing him to die before the *parousia* [when Christ returns]) by way of resurrection.”

The soul/spirit of man exists forever, but it is dependent on God (on the Spirit) for eternal life; those who lose/forfeit their souls (cf., e.g., Matt. 16:26) will not cease existing, but they will not participate in eternal life. I should point out that born-again Christians have already received the first installment of life/existence in/by the Spirit (cf., e.g., Rom. 8:11, 23). We have been born again by the Spirit, but we “cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5) in the full and final sense until we're born into the fulness of eternal life by the Spirit when Christ returns. (See under 1 Cor. 15:20 on this final [completed] birth.) John 3:6 says, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” We will not become “spirit,” in the sense this word is used at the end of John 3:6, until we have experienced this ultimate (completed) birth. We will not fully leave the flesh behind and be caught up into the glory of what it means to be a son of God until after this birth. We will still have a body after this birth, but it will be a spiritual body, a body fitted for, and fully caught up into, life in the Spirit, life in God's heavenly kingdom. In Rom. 8:23 we are told that our bodies aren't redeemed yet; however, they are now temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19).

The adjective *psuchikos* is used six times in the New Testament. The NASB translates it “natural” five times (1 Cor. 2:14; 15:44 [twice]; 15:46; and James 3:15) and “worldly-minded” in Jude 1:19. This adjective could be translated “soulish” in all six verses; being “soulish” is contrasted with being “spiritual” in/by the Spirit. The primary contrast the New Testament is concerned with is that between the soul of man (or, the flesh/old man) and the Spirit of God (not the spirit of man). Many Christians make the mistake (and it can be a serious mistake) of seeing the primary contrast being between the soul (or, flesh) and the spirit.

Here in 1 Cor. 15:44 and in 15:46 “natural” (or, soulish) is used in the sense of being appropriate for this world/age, where, for one thing, the influence of the Spirit is limited, even for born-again Christians (by comparison with His influence in the age to come); the “natural body” is not appropriate for heaven: “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 15:50). As the word “natural” is used in 15:44 and 15:46, we need not necessarily include any negative ideas (though these verses are loaded with negative ideas because of the fall and sinfulness of man) since Paul uses the word here to cover Adam before the fall. Note, for example, that Adam had a “flesh and blood” body before the fall.] **body, it is raised a spiritual body.** [As the context shows, a “spiritual body” is a body appropriate for heaven. It’s clear that Paul isn’t speaking of a spirit without a body. (Cf., e.g., Luke 24:36-46.) That viewpoint would be a denial of the resurrection. After death a person can be called a spirit (cf., e.g., Heb. 12:23); they can also be called a soul (cf., e.g., Rev. 6:9; 20:4); these three references deal with persons in heaven, heaven in a preliminary sense, persons waiting to receive resurrection bodies (cf. 1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:13-18). The words *spirit* and *soul*, when referring to mankind, are often used interchangeably in the New Testament.] **(45) So also it is written, “The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL** [with a soulish/natural (flesh and blood) body].” [This quotation from Gen. 2:7 deals with Adam at the time of his creation, before the fall.] **The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.** [There is, of course, an infinite difference between the first Adam and the last Adam, the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus is deity, God the Son (e.g., Isa. 9:6, 7; John 1:1-3; Rev. 5:11-14; 21:22, 23; and 22:1-16.) For Him to become a “life-giving spirit,” however, in the sense the words are used here, also required Him to become a man (though not just a man) through the virgin birth, and for Him to overthrow sin, Satan, and death (spiritual and physical death) through His sinless life, His atoning death, His resurrection, and His ascension. On Christ’s “life-giving”, see, e.g., 1 Cor. 15:20-23; John 5:21, 24-29; and Phil. 3:21. (“Life-giving” here in 15:45 is a participle of the verb used in 15:22, 36. This verb is also used in John 5:21; 6:63; Rom. 4:17; 8:11; 2 Cor. 3:6; Gal. 3:21; 1. Tim. 6:13; and 1 Pet. 3:18. Some of these verses speak of our being made alive, in a preliminary/partial sense, in the new birth.) There’s no conflict between speaking of Jesus raising the dead and speaking of the Spirit raising the dead. (It’s also Biblical to speak of the Father raising the dead, e.g., Rom. 8:11.) The Son and the Spirit are very much united, and they work together in many areas. The Spirit can even be called the Spirit of Christ (cf. Acts 16:6, 7; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6; Phil. 1:19; and Pet. 1:11) in that the Spirit was sent by Him starting at Pentecost, represents Him on the earth, was sent to exalt Him and draw men to Him, etc.] **(46) However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual.** [This order was part of God’s eternal plan.] **(47) The first man is from** [or, “of, out of”] **the earth, earthy** [The NIV has, “was of the dust of the earth.” Adam was of the earth even before the fall.]; **the second man is from heaven.** [The Lord Jesus Christ, being deity, is from heaven (cf., e.g., John 3:13). He also

is from/of heaven in that He is the first man (though He is much more than just a man) to be caught up into the fulness of the eternal life of heaven. For us to be caught up into the fulness of eternal life will, of course, mean a whole lot more than just receiving glorified bodies.] **(48) As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy** [Adam and mankind are earthy by creation, as Paul has just said; however, through the fall and all the subsequent sin, the gap between heaven and mankind was greatly widened.]; **and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly.** **(49) And just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.** [What infinitely good news! Before God is done, in Christ Jesus believers will be taken to a place much higher than what Adam had before the fall. What a Savior! What a salvation! “We will be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren” (Rom. 8:29). (See under 1 Cor. 15:20.) It must be understood, of course, that there will be a big difference between the Lord Jesus Christ and us throughout eternity. He is deity; He is worshipped; etc.] **(50) Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.** [We will have imperishable, glorified bodies that are beyond flesh and blood when we inherit the kingdom of God. (We have already entered the kingdom of God in a preliminary sense [cf., e.g., Matt. 12:28; Luke 11:20; 17:21; Rom. 14:17; and Col. 1:13].) In Lev. 17:11 we read, “the life of the flesh is in the blood.” I suppose we can say that our glorified bodies will not have blood in them, and that life then will be entirely by the Spirit (see under 19:44).] **(51) Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep** [The apostle can tell us this “mystery” (which was formerly hidden as part of God’s plan of salvation) because it has been revealed to him. “We shall not all sleep” means that some true Christians will still be alive on the earth when Christ returns; they never will die. See, e.g., 1 Thess. 4:17; Matt. 24:31.], **but we shall all be changed** [All believers (those still alive and those who will have died before Christ returns) will be changed – we will be caught up into never-ending glory, with glorified bodies. Those who have died will be resurrected into glory; those still living will be transformed to the glorified state. First Thess. 4:16, 17 inform us that the dead will be raised first, just before the believers still living are transformed; we will then be raptured/caught up together in the clouds (of heaven) to meet the Lord Jesus in the air. This sounds exciting, doesn’t it?], **(52) in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye** [The apostle is speaking of the blinking of the eye, the rapid closing and opening of the eyelid].], **at the last trumpet** [I believe this “last trumpet” is very important to help us understand the basics of God’s end-time scenario. Significantly, this is the same trumpet as the trumpet of Matt. 24:31; 1 Thess. 4:16; and Rev. 11:15. The last reference apparently explains the meaning of “the last trumpet.” (It’s quite possible that we understand this last trumpet much better than Paul did; he died some thirty years before the book of Revelation was given to John.) There are seven trumpets in Revelation, and the trumpet that sounds in Rev. 11:15 is clearly the seventh and last trumpet. At that time Christ returns, the resurrection/transformation and rapture take place, and His end-time reign (which very much includes judgment) begins. See *The Mid-Week Rapture*, starting on page 289, for a detailed discussion of Rev. 11:15-18. In that section I discuss the key reasons why I believe this trumpet will sound right in the middle of Daniel’s 70th week.]; **for the trumpet will sound, and the dead** [the believers who will have died before Christ returns] **will be raised imperishable, and we** [those believers still living on the earth when Christ returns] **shall be changed.** [Verses like this one and 1 Thess. 4:17 show that the apostle thought that it was possible he would live to see the coming of the Lord.] **(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. [Cf. 1 Cor. 15:26. Isaiah 25:8 says, “[God] will swallow up death for all time, And the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces....” This prophecy of Isaiah (read Isa. 25:6-8) apparently includes, but also goes far beyond, the resurrection of believers at the return of Christ. Revelation 21:1-22:5 are a very important cross-reference for Isa. 25:6-8. In these verses of Revelation, we see those from the nations who have been permitted to enter God’s new earth with its new Jerusalem (sometimes called the eternal state) after the millennium. Revelation 21:4 says, “and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death....” Both passages (from Isaiah and Revelation) show that many peoples will be saved from the nations (they are apparently distinguished from those who constitute God’s true Israel, who will reign with Christ forever) and they will have a place in God’s eternal kingdom. Revelation 21:27 confirms that all those saved from the nations are saved through Jesus Christ. On Rev. 21:1-22:5 see Note 3, which starts on page 338 of *The Mid-Week Rapture*, and see under these verses in this paper. (Isaiah chapters 24-27 are discussed verse-by-verse in my paper dated August 2000.) I’m not suggesting that Paul was including all these ideas here by “quoting” from Isa. 25:8.] **(55) O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?”** [See Hos. 13:14. Hebrews 2:14 shows that the overthrow of death also means the overthrow of Satan (and sin), “who [in some ways] had the power of death.”] **(56) The sting of death is sin** [In this word picture, the enemy, death (like a deadly scorpion, which has a sting in its tail [cf. Rev. 9:10]) kills—it kills through sin. When death has lost its sting (and it has already lost its sting for Christians in most senses [cf., e.g., Phil. 1:21, 23; 2 Cor. 5:8]), it is powerless to harm us.], **and the power of sin is the law** [Paul frequently makes the point that the Law (the old covenant) could not solve the sin problem; it rather intensified the sin problem for those under the Law. For one thing, sinning against God’s Law, which even specifies a death penalty for rebellion, clearly makes sin more serious. See Rom. 4:15; 5:13, 20; and 7:7-13. The death of mankind came from Adam’s (and Eve’s) rebellion against God’s very specific commandment (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 5:12). Adam’s (and Eve’s) sin was all the more serious because he was totally free when he sinned, unlike his offspring who were born into spiritual death (but the death wasn’t total/complete; we still have some freedom/capacity to respond to God, etc.).]; **(57) but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory** [Note “victory” in 15:54, 55.] **through our Lord Jesus Christ.** [Unlike the old covenant established on the Mosaic Law, the new covenant in the Lord Jesus Christ fully solves the sin/Satan/death problem.] **(58) Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.** [On being in vain, cf. 1 Cor. 15:2, 14, and 17. Our toil would be in vain if the gospel, including the resurrection, were not true. We’re never wasting our time when we’re doing the will of God by His grace through faith (everything else is a waste of time, or worse); it will all work for the glory of God and for our good.]