

Bodily under these
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Bodily Resurrection and 1 Corinthians 15: 42-54 By: Joe Scholar One of the most significant issues concerning nearly all religions, Christianity among them, concerns the fate of men following their death. Believing in an inevitable resurrection of the body among the faithful, Paul, a principle founder of Christianity, asserted his beliefs on the nature of bodily resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15: 42-54. As eternity tends to last a long time, believing Christians (even agnostics such as myself) would likely be somewhat eager to arrive at an accurate interpretation of Paul's message found in the above verses, so as to glean insight as to what might await them following their last heartbeat. The approach I will take in analyzing 1 Corinthians: 42-54 will be to: 1) explain how the verses fit in with the overall structure of the book; 2) to explain and paraphrase the meaning behind the passage; 3) relate the verses to similar passages expressed elsewhere by Paul; 4) and lastly to touch upon some of the controversy associated with the verses. 1 Corinthians was written around 54 C.

E. and was addressed to the congregation which was made up primarily of gentiles and was located in Corinth. At the time, Corinth was a highly urbanized and religiously diverse city which made it very conducive to the early Christian movement. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians was written as a response to a letter he had received (which did not survive) from the Corinthians in which Paul was asked to settle various disputes that were arising within the struggling congregation.

Writing in apostolic fashion to the congregation he had founded, Paul's letter while pastoral, answered numerous questions and demanded numerous changes ranging from: the rich eating with the poor at the church suppers
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(11: 18-22); to curbing the acceptance of sexual immorality (5: 1-13); to abstaining from taking fellow Christians to court (6: 12-20); to answering the question on the acceptability of eating meat begot from pagan sacrifice (8: 1-13); to the role of women in the church (11: 2-16); to the importance of prophesying (14: 1-40); and much, much more. It was under these auspices that Paul answered the question of whether man would be with or without a body following resurrection. Although all of the 15th chapter deals with issues of resurrection, the place of the body is curtly addressed in verses 42-54 and is prefaced with the 35th verse which asks, "But someone will ask, How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" (15: 35). Paul believed that at the time of the resurrection the perishable body would be transformed into an imperishable body, that would neither be a ghost-like spirit nor a fleshly body, but rather some sort of combination of the two. As Sanders phrases it, "...resurrection means transformed body, not walking corpse or disembodied spirit.

"As William Wrede describes Paul's transformation of the body, "He says that they are dead' or are risen again' with Christ'; or more specifically they are dead to sin, to the Law,' crucified to the world'; the body of sin is destroyed'; they are no longer in the flesh'; or else he says simply that they are dead'" Paul, whether because he does not recognize the need for further elaboration, or equally as likely, as he does not know how to accurately elaborate further, does not offer any greater explanation as to the nature of the new imperishable body. Seemingly similar to changing one's clothes, Paul simply explains the transformation, in the capacity of the mortal body putting on' immortality. The nearly tautological backbone behind Paul's

reasoning is that the since the mortal, by definition isn't immortal, in order to gain an eternal life, the mortal must necessarily become immortal. As Wrede interestingly interprets it, " If the misery of man consists in his habitation in the flesh, his happiness must depend on his liberation from the flesh, that is, on his death." Moreover, once immortality is put on, death, the previously inevitable enemy of the mortal, will be destroyed. As Paul crisply writes in verse 54, " When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: Death has been swallowed up in victory.

“(15: 54). The single implied description Paul does make sure to include regarding the body, is the notion that the resurrected imperishable body will bear likeness and similarity to the fleshly body that preceded it. Having believed he had seen Jesus's resurrected body (as he wrote in 1 Corinthians 9: 1) which presumably outwardly appeared as