

NOVEMBER 18, 2019

Raised to Life – Part 2

I Corinthians 15 and 16

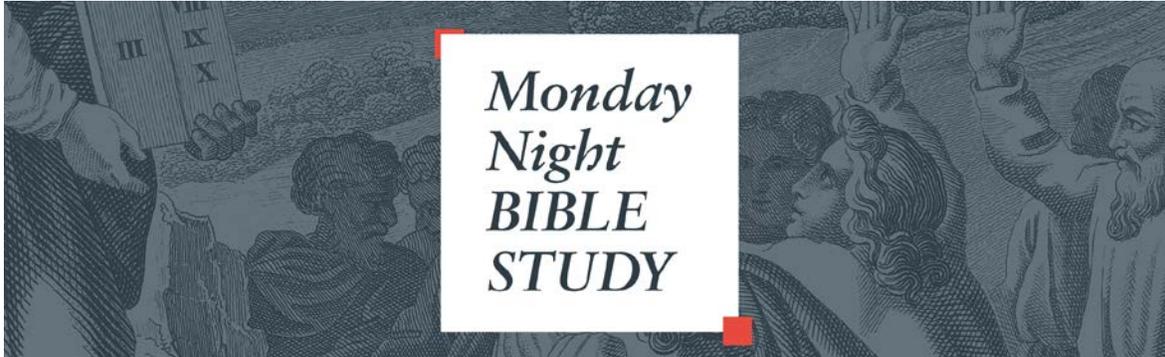
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In I Corinthians Chapter 15, Paul preached that Jesus rose bodily from the dead. And because He rose bodily from the dead, in the future, those who belong to Jesus will also rise bodily from the dead. How should our future bodily resurrection effect the way we think and behave now?

In chapter 15, Paul is dealing with resurrection – both Jesus’s resurrection and our future resurrection as His church. To proclaim the resurrection of Jesus is to declare God’s victory over death. And it also means that Jesus was raised bodily so that we could be raised bodily with Him in the future. Our Christian way of life, the way we obey God, is anchored in the fact that one day He’ll faithfully raise us bodily from dead. If God cares enough about our physical bodies to raise them, should we not use them in His service? If God cares enough to raise your body, should we not care for it enough to not join it to others in ways that it should not be joined through sex? For Paul, understanding that we’ll be raised bodily in the future helps to mature our thinking so that we live a more Godly life.

Jesus is called the first born from among the dead, and the first fruits of the resurrection. He went first in the resurrection and because of it we can have absolute confidence that God will raise us just like Jesus because we believed the message. Some in Corinth denied that we would be raised. In doing so, Paul is saying that they’re actually denying that Jesus was raised. And if you’re saying that Jesus wasn’t raised, then you have gotten very far away from the gospel you first received.

“But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection from the dead?” (v.12) Before they were Christians, those in the church practiced a pagan religion that had a very low view of the human body because they perceived it to be a hindrance. Paul is saying that God has a very high view of the body, that having a physical body is what it means to be human. As a result, God will raise it. In the meantime, you should honor it by living right and using it for God’s work in the world. Paul warns them that their negative view of the body has not only caused them to reject the future resurrection of the church, but their thinking has greater consequences.



NOVEMBER 18, 2019

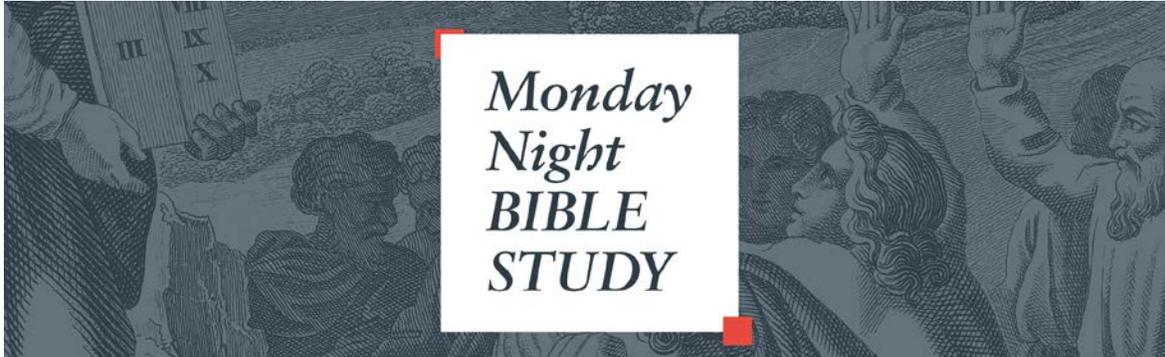
Raised to Life (Part 2) - Page 2

I Corinthians 15:32-34 - Paul's point is that their abandonment in the belief of a future resurrection has caused in large part the sin they are experiencing in the church. They struggle to see that certain sexual behaviors are inappropriate, that getting drunk at the Lord's supper is wrong, etc. And they fail to see that those sins are connected to their refusal to believe in the future resurrection of the dead. If there is no resurrection, then it's fair to simply use the body for pleasure because it will be disposed of in the end. If the body is worthless and there's no hope for its future, then, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die."

Paul isn't talking about mentally agreeing to the fact that you'll be raised. For Paul, you must make your future resurrection your hope. It should be something that you think about in earnest, hopeful expectation. It's something to hold in your mind, to think about, until you find yourself longing for it. Paul teaches this idea of hope for the resurrection (instead of just mentally agreeing that it will happen) in many places (Colossians 1:27). It's Christ in you so we have an earnest expectation of glory (resurrection).

Our whole being, even our physical bodies, are destined for glory. That's the point of where Paul is going next. Our bodies will be glorified. They will be every bit physical, yet in an incorruptible condition - free from death, and capable of existing forever. In other words, Paul in vv.35-49, is talking about our future bodies in ways of it being similar and dissimilar to our current corruptible bodies. Our future resurrected body will not be a ghostly body, or a spiritual body, like a vapor. Instead it will be physical like it is now. Yet our resurrected bodies will be freed from the condition of death and decay. They will not age or wear out. Some in this church rejected the bodily resurrection of the church because they believed the body was weak and a hindrance. But also, they rejected the idea of a bodily resurrection because they thought it was ridiculous to see a corpse rising from the dead.

They had the impression that, when Paul talked about resurrection, it meant simply that corpses would come back to life like in a zombie movie. They imagined bodies just popping out of graves. And because of their culture, and other reasons, that was a very offensive thought to them. Paul will say here that resurrection is more than coming back to life again bodily. It's coming back in a condition freed from death and corruption. It's coming back like Jesus did when He was raised. When He was raised bodily, He still had the scars on His hands and the wound on His side, and He ate fish with the disciples on the shore. Nevertheless, His body was in a condition where death couldn't touch it again. It was released from death and therefore free to live eternally. In other words, it's been glorified. Resurrection means release from death and corruption and capable of living forever – this is called glorification. Our glorification is our hope.



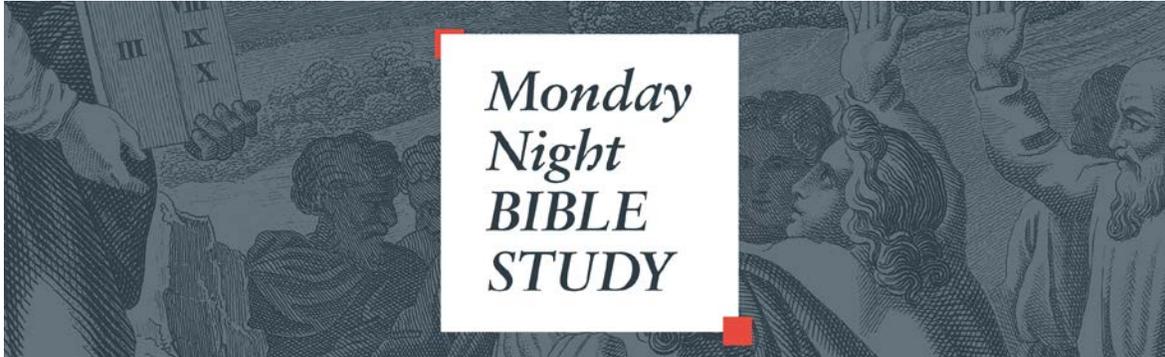
NOVEMBER 18, 2019

Raised to Life (Part 2) – Page 3

1 Corinthians 15:37-52 - You can't tell exactly what a plant will look like by only looking at a seed. Even if you know what kind of seed it is, you can't tell by looking at it how tall the full-grown plant is going to be, or what shape it will be. You'll have to wait and see. Likewise, Paul is saying, we must wait for the harvest of the resurrection to find out exactly what our resurrected bodies will look like (vv.36-38). He's telling them, "Why worry about the details of what a resurrected body will look like? And especially, why allow this question to cause doubt about a resurrection?" Not only this, Paul goes on to say that there are many different kinds of bodies, including not only the endless diversity of animal life but also the diverse "heavenly bodies" of the sun, moon, and stars (vv.39-41). Earthly bodies have their own type of splendor. But the heavenly bodies of the moon, stars, and sun have a very different form of glory. They shine brightly. Likewise, so it will be at the resurrection. Our earthly bodies will be raised to a much greater form of glory just like the stars and moon have a greater glory than bodies here in the earth. Paul says the same thing when he speaks of Adam compared to Jesus. Adam was an earthly man and our body presently bears his image in that we will die too just like Adam. But just as we presently bear Adam's image in terms of mortality and death, at the resurrection we will bear the immortal image of Jesus's resurrection. Like Him, we will be in a new physical condition free from death and decay. We will be glorified (vv.45-49). How will this happen? In a moment, in the blink of an eye (vv.51-52). Those dead and those still alive at His coming will be transformed in a gloried physical state.

Paul believes that having a hope for the resurrection of the church will help them in their work for God and their worship. We trust we will be raised because we believe He already has. It will be a time of celebration for us who are raised. In fact, we will say on that day what it says 1 Corinthians 15:54-55. Jesus went first in the resurrection defeating death within Himself. But we will follow with Him on the Day of the Lord when He appears again and permanently removes sin and death and raises us from the dead.

Think of the shout of praise that we will give on that Day when we're raised. That shout should be going on now in the present in anticipation of our resurrection. Celebrating His resurrection, and ours with Him, is the basis of worship for Paul. Our praise and worship also announces to the world that there is a reason to sing! Life no longer ends in permanent physical death. There will be a resurrection for those who have put their faith in Jesus. Humans will live in God's world forever and ever just like He planned it. We sing because we know that those who believe that Jesus was raised will also be resurrected (physically) and they will participate in the new earth and new



NOVEMBER 18, 2019

Raised to Life (Part 2) – Page 4

heaven. We sing because God's loving takeover of the world has begun. We sing because we know He will fully transform and renew creation in the future.

Here is the third and final thing that a hope for resurrection will do for us. 1 Corinthians 15:58 - "Therefore, my brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourself to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor will not be in vain." "Therefore" - in light of what I said about our future resurrection, stand firm in the truth and hope of it. "Stand firm" - Let nothing move you because your resurrection is certain. There is nothing to fear in life or death because our destiny isn't destruction or corruption, it's glorification. In other words, you're not doing things in this world for the world to only be destroyed in the end. What you do in the world matters because God will see that it lasts forever. And with this, we will be rewarded for our labor. Our labor in the world has meaning because the world will last forever.

Chapter 16 - Paul mentions an offering that this church will give to other churches that are struggling particularly because of persecution (vv.1-4). After he addresses this offering, he makes some general requests of assistance from this church (vv.5-12). He asks that when Timothy comes to visit them soon, that they take care of him while he's there and assist him when he leaves. He mentions that Apollos has agreed to come as a return visit, and that he will visit when he has the opportunity. After he asks them to take care of Timothy and Apollos, he gives some general words of encouragement and guidance. In verses 13-14 Paul's words, "Stand firm" echoes the words which opened and closed chapter 15 on the resurrection. Paul is telling them again to stand firm in the faith. In other words, stand firm in the fact that Jesus rose from the dead and that we will too. His resurrection and our future resurrection are the controlling center of Paul's understanding of Jesus. A revelation of our resurrection and our hope in it helps us live more Godly lives. "Do everything in love" – Love have been the major theme in much of the letter. Paul is giving one last reminder that love should be the umpire by which whatever they do is appropriate. They were a very prideful group of Christians, doing things for their own selfish gains. But here Paul reminds them that, going forward, if they want to know if they're on the right track, all they need to do is make sure everything is done in love. Then it will be approved by God.