

A Case for Christ-Lent 2010 **Jesus as Body Resurrected**

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Digging Deeper (Questions are on the last page)

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Background Notes

Key Scripture Texts: Luke 24:36-53; 1 Corinthians 15:12-23; 35-58; 1 John 1:1-4

Introduction

Nature permeates the world with impermanence. Nothing seems to last. Creation itself was the primordial battle with “the formless and the empty,” when light and darkness became distinct, water and earth divided, and function replaced mere existence. Left to itself, nature would have fallen once more into the void.

Life is another matter entirely. Life resists formlessness and emptiness, a rebel in a seemingly alien land. Mobility overcomes inert matter, assimilating the raw materials Nature provides, transforming them into viable structures, producing perception and reproducing itself. As if to thumb its nose at Nature’s demand for a return to the void, life careens onward, filling the world with variety, beauty, and hope. Still, living things die, and apparently, on some accounts, have done so for time immemorial. Impermanence nips at the heels of life.

Human life offers promise. It stands in the garden of God, surrounded by nurture and not mere nature. Towering overhead are the boughs of the tree of life and the tantalizing offer, “Eat from me and live forever.” Nearby stands another tree, the gathering place where decisions about good and evil are made. Distracted by the competence of human judgment, conscious life decides on its own to make something of the uniqueness which distinguishes humanity from all other life. The human being resists death while at the same time controlling life. In so doing, its reach exceeds its grasp, and the whole project tumbles into exile from the garden. Death wins, yet again. “In the day you eat, you will surely die.”

Denying death, humankind survives in the billions of its offspring, filled with variety, beauty, and hope. A new lease on life, perhaps, exiled, but not annihilated, the human race leaves artifacts of its hope as it buries its dead. We probably find it grotesque — this piling up of bones and the collecting of whole families in mounds or boxes or tombs or temples or pyramids. Clinging to the remnants of the ancestral past, this solitary creature sees in the durability of bone the hint of permanence, the “intimation of immortality.”

Our earliest evidence appears in the archaeology of ancient Jericho, one of the oldest continuously lived-in cities of human history, dating to 9,000 B.C.E. As if to mock death, the residents gathered together ten skulls, plastered and painted, in an effort to preserve the forms of its loved ones — relative permanence in the midst of death, and the rebellious promise that life somehow might remain. Farther west, in Egypt, the dehydration of the human body after death, thanks to the properties of salt combined with other chemical applications, made possible the prolonged preservation of the human form — mummies — which then rested inside a sarcophagus, a powerful sign that life is suppose to last forever.

To us, all of this seems like a feeble attempt at the impossible. Are not all of these rituals of the ancients merely parodies of immortality, some faint effort to deny death its due? Is this is not wishful fantasy, the dodging of a reality which overtakes us all? Perhaps. But then again, consider the young science of cryonics, the medical technology of preserving humans and animals with a view to future resuscitation. This entails low-temperature methods, later reversible: deep-freeze followed by controlled thaw. Such efforts challenge the definition of death by arguing that somebody dead by today’s standards ought to be considered potentially alive by future standards. Much depends on whether human personality — memory and identity — consists solely in cell

structures and chemistry. Of course, there's the tricky matter of restoring the corpse to life, assuming cures are found for the diseases causing death in the first place. What if the cryonic methods of "freezing" by today's standards are badly flawed? What good will that do for future attempts — even with better science — of revitalization?

Isn't this a fine way to talk on an Easter Sunday! I suppose we should begin with the triumphant announcement that death has been defeated and resurrection is now the reality on which our faith depends. Having said that we still must grapple with the facts of human existence and its evident frailty. What does it mean to be truly human *after death*? Is Easter simply about surviving death as an immortal soul gone to heaven? Did Jesus come in order that we might be reminded that there is life after death? What we propose in this week's study is that the drama of life and death, along with the human quest for permanence, means more than either 1) souls without bodies going to heaven (or elsewhere), or 2) the resuscitation of a corpse. If we are not careful in stating all of this, we might end up having a view of life after death that looks no different than that of our ancient ancestors. What we propose in this study is not merely "life after death," but, as some have suggested, "life after life after death."

The Resurrected Jesus: A Real Body (Luke 24:36-53)

³⁶ As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" ³⁷ But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. ³⁸ And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 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." ⁴⁰ And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹ And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate before them. ⁴⁴ Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." ⁵⁰ Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. ⁵¹ While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. ⁵² And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ⁵³ and were continually in the temple blessing God.

This week's first reading is part of Luke's longer narrative about the resurrection of Jesus. Before we examine the assigned text, let's layout the structure of Luke 24, and note how Luke accomplishes his design:

- A** 24:1-3 Women go to the tomb outside Jerusalem, and Jesus' body is not there, leaving them perplexed
- B** 24:4-8 Two men in shining clothes appear, frighten them, tell that Jesus is risen, ask them to remember his predictions which they do
- C** 24:9-12 Women return from the tomb to Jerusalem, tell the eleven and others who do not yet believe, prompting Peter to go to the tomb to see for himself where he sees empty grave clothes
- D** 24:13-16 Pair from Emmaus leaving Jerusalem, talking about recent events when Jesus joins them without their recognizing him.
- E** 24:17-19a Jesus ask what they are talking about, they are surprised that he does not know, think that he is a visitor in Jerusalem
- F** 24:19b-21 They tell him about "Jesus of Nazareth," calling him a mighty man and a prophet, who was executed by the leadership, dashing their hopes, especially since it is the third day
- G** 24:22-23a They tell him about the women's report about his missing body and their vision of angels
- H** 24:23b "Who said that we was alive"
- G'** 24:24 They tell about the disciples' report confirming the women's testimony but did not finding Jesus
- F'** 24:25-27 Jesus chides them for their slowness to understand, and then explains from the Scriptures who he is
- E'** 24:28-30 They show hospitality to their visitor who is about to leave them, and while they sit at the table, Jesus takes bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to them
- D'** 24:24:31-32 They recognize Jesus, he vanishes, and they comment on how his Scriptural teaching made their hearts burn within them
- C'** 24:33-35 Pair from Emmaus, returning to Jerusalem, hearing the eleven tell of Jesus' resurrection and that Peter has seen him, and telling how they recognized him when he broke bread
- B'** 24:36-49 Jesus appears, shows them his body, asks them to touch him, eats fish, reminds them of his predictions
- A'** 24:50-53 Disciples go to Bethany, and Jesus is taken from them into heaven, leaving them worshipping and joyful

Read the chiasmus from top to bottom first, noting the flow of the main events, and who was involved. Then, read the chiasmus in pairs (that is, **A** with **A'**, etc.), observing how the events of the Emmaus story in the center climax with the words “Who said that he was alive,” and how the discovery of the empty tomb at the beginning finds its parallel in the ascension of Jesus at the end. This structure is worth studying, spending time with the meaningful connections between different parts of the narrative. Remember, ancient writings like this aren’t simple sequential literary forms, but love to weave a tapestry of repeating, corresponding, and parallel elements. They function more like a piece of cloth than like a single strand of thread. Herein is their beauty both as stories and as works of literature. This method creates emphasis, contrast, foreshadowing, and fulfillment. See if you can find all of these features throughout Luke 24 as you read it.

Our lesson from 24:36-39 belongs to the last two chiasmus pairs which we will set out once again in order to note the parallels:

A 24:1-3 Women go to the tomb outside Jerusalem, and Jesus’ body is not there, leaving them perplexed

B 24:4-8 Two men in shining clothes appear, frighten them, tell that Jesus is risen, ask them to remember his predictions which they do

B' 24:36-49 Jesus appears, shows them his body, asks them to touch him, eats fish, reminds them of his predictions

A' 24:50-53 Disciples go to Bethany, and Jesus is taken from them into heaven, leaving them worshipping and joyful

The sudden appearance of Jesus in the midst of the whole assembled gathering parallels the sudden appearance of the two angels to the women at the empty tomb. The movement of the disciples from Jerusalem to Bethany where Jesus is taken up in his ascension to heaven parallels the movement of the women to the tomb outside Jerusalem. What the angels try to do for the women who are thoroughly perplexed is to offer a reminder of what Jesus had told them before he went to the cross. In the face of such devastating absence, the angels offer the possibility of a future presence based on his previous words. The fact that the narrator of this account uses the words “two men” (from the Greek: *andrēs duo*) makes the appearance of the angels seem concrete and real. Only later in the text does Luke actually refer to them as “a vision of angels” (24:23). From the narrator’s perspective, these two are men clothed with shining clothes (Greek: *esthēs astraptousē*). The emphasis on is on the brightness emanating from their garments, flashing like lightning. This term was used in classical literature of lightning bolts sent by Zeus as omens.

In effect, 24:1-3 introduces the narrative with the empty tomb and the mystery surrounding it, something which leaves the women without any explanation. The missing Jesus continues to create a problem for those who knew and loved him. But this week’s reading (24:36-49) contains the answer to this difficulty as the risen Jesus leads his followers outside of Jerusalem, blesses them, and ascends to heaven. The totality of their experience with him no longer leaves them perplexed but filled with joy and worship, ready to return to Jerusalem where their praise continues in temple, and their work of proclamation begins in earnest.

Also, 24:4-8 introduces the angelic messengers who suddenly appear to announce the risen Jesus to the women and connect his resurrection with his previous teaching, calling it to mind. But this week’s reading (24:36-49) contains a better experience for all the followers when Jesus himself suddenly appears to prove that he is risen, giving concrete evidences and a Scriptural understanding of his mission. Further, he restores meaning to their lives by giving them a mission of their own. By so doing, he fills the emptiness of the tomb with both the fullness of his presence and the fulfillment of their purpose. The angels might well have been clothed with “dazzling garments,” but the disciples will be clothed with “power from on high.” The women went out of Jerusalem to find an empty tomb, but the followers of Jesus will stay in Jerusalem to find fullness in their hearts. Seeing angels in supernatural light brought the women fear; seeing Jesus suddenly in their midst, startled and frightened the disciples. But the resurrected Jesus appeared with the calming words “Peace to you!” and turned their fear into joy.

Through these and other literary strategies, Luke tells the story of the risen Jesus. The whole account resonates with concrete images, physical experiences, definite locales, passionate emotions, intense dialogue, and

unexpected occurrences. Everything about the passage suggests factuality and not fantasy. When we evaluate the followers of Jesus as presented in this narrative, they appear as grieving, wondering and perplexed human beings, having recently been overtaken by the tragedy of Jesus' humiliating crucifixion against the backdrop of their own cowardice and fear. They appear in the story as clueless and passive in the face of events which they are powerless to change. Then suddenly, without warning or premonition, they are confronted with a fresh reality unlike anything they had known before. Evidence unaccounted for by any ordinary cause piles up in front of them. Angels, empty grave clothes, a stranger on the road, and the familiar breaking of the bread — all of these facts must be explained. Emotionally, such things create an unresolved tension which strains common understanding, and the disciples exhibit all the qualities of persons totally surprised by what is happening to them.

The disciples are not the agents of these events. They did not create them, nor did they invent the idea of the resurrection in order to explain them. The narrative reveals wholly passive human beings overtaken by events, and then proceeds to resolve the tension of the unexplainable by thrusting Jesus himself onto the scene saying and doing things which provoke further amazement rather than immediate acceptance. I especially like the way Luke describes their initial reaction to the risen Jesus: "And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling..." (24:41). The Greek does a superb job of saying this: *eti de apistountōn autōn apo tēs charos kai thaumazontōn*. Literally, Luke says, "But still they (*or, yet*) disbelieving" (present active participle) from the joy and wonder..." This construction is a genitive absolute describing the disciples' state of mind as being a mixture of unbelief, joy, and wonder. Or, perhaps, they had the joy and wonder as a result of seeing Jesus, but those emotions prompted a secondary response of unbelief, much like our saying "It's too good to be true!" — which combines both joy and doubt in a single experience. Luke may be inviting the reader to get inside the skin of these disciples and imagine what it must have felt like to see Jesus and hear him speak without having a clue how this could be true.

Notice the strong emphasis on the tangible. Although Jesus speaks to them with familiar words like "Peace to you!" (John 14:27), seeks to alleviate their "troubled" hearts (see John 14:1, 27), and invites them to look at his hands and feet, yet, he moves beyond the sense of hearing and of sight, and calls for them to "touch and see." The combination of those two senses is significant for removing the doubt that they might be *just* "seeing and hearing" things. While it is doubtful that group hallucinations (a form of *cognitive dissonance*) of that sort are possible, Jesus wants to eliminate the fear brought about by their supposition that they were seeing a "spirit," or a "ghost." The disciples knew the difference between ghosts and real people. That's why it is misguided to think that they were tricked into believing that Jesus was truly alive because they saw a specter. Even in their confused, frightened, and grief-stricken condition, they distinguished such a being from the tangible Jesus.

Jesus, knowing their doubt, proceeds to offer himself tangibly in evidence to dispel their skepticism. His hands and feet would be marked by the crucifixion ordeal, although Luke doesn't bother to explain this to his readers, no doubt because he figured they were smart enough to figure it out. On the other hand, John's Gospel makes a sharper point of the tangible evidence by drawing Thomas into the narrative at this point, a disciple who earlier had demanded proof from nail prints and wounded side (see John 20:25), a request Jesus was more than willing to oblige (John 20:27). In Jewish thought, a solid witness entailed two or three coherence testimonies (Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15; 2 Corinthians 13:1; 1 Timothy 5:19; Hebrews 10:28), and so Jesus further confirms the sense of touch by asking for and eating "before them" a piece of broiled fish (24:41-43). The realism of this episode attaches to the adjective "broiled," showing the manner the fish was cooked and not only that Jesus ate fish. It was not just *ichthus*, but *ichthus optos*. Mentioning "broiled" fish conjures up the sense of smell and intimates to the reader the sense of taste, at last representing all five senses.

This is not a sketchy, hastily contrived or fictionalized account of what the disciples thought happened to Jesus after he was crucified. The fact is that the disciples had absolutely no idea what to make of what had happened to Jesus. Dreaming up a resurrection account in order to recover Jesus from the dustbin of history was the furthest thing from their minds. They were having far too much difficulty believing that Jesus was actually

dead and that his whole career as the One who was announcing and bringing in the kingdom had seemingly come to a screeching halt with his untimely arrest and execution. Even while Jesus was alive, the biggest protest he drew from his followers was not that he would rise from the dead, but that he would go to the cross and die. Repeatedly he talked about it, and repeatedly the disciples, including Simon Peter, resisted the whole idea (Luke 9:22; 13:32; 18:33; Mark 8:32-33; Matthew 16:22-23). If they could not handle the notion of his coming death, what could they possibly think he meant by “rising on the third day”? Based on their limited theological understanding, it is likely that they had no language for even talking about the resurrection. The only way they would know what that could possibly mean was to actually see Jesus, risen from the dead, living in his resurrection body, and showing himself to them in tangible form. And this, Luke tells us, is exactly what he did.

A marvelous continuity of Jesus’ the human being, dead and risen, is depicted in 24:45-49. Several points in that portion of this week’s reading are worth mentioning.

1. **The disciples needed to have their minds “opened” (24:45).** This is comparable to 24:31 where the Emmaus pair had their eyes opened. Doubt isn’t always the product of insufficient evidence. Some people disbelieve because they refuse to believe, having closed their minds to the possibility of new evidence or a fresh viewpoint on old evidence. In John’s Gospel, Jesus warned the Jewish crowds to heed the light while it was still shining, reminding them that darkness would soon overtake them. Commenting on this, the narrator wrote:

³⁷ Though he had done so many signs before them, they still **did not believe** in him, ³⁸ so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: “Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” ³⁹ Therefore **they could not believe** (John 12:37-39).

The connection between “did not” and “could not” is profound. As it turned out, only the bodily resurrected Jesus confronted the disciples with the sort of evidence necessary to move them from disbelief to joyful trust. What opened their minds was none other than the inescapable presence of the risen Jesus.

2. **The disciples needed to have a continuing purpose rooted in their testimony to the risen Jesus (24:48).** When Jesus spoke the words “You are witnesses of these things,” he was placing the moral obligation to tell others what the disciples knew for a fact to be true. A clean straight line carries the disciples through the earthly ministry of Jesus, his death and his resurrection. They saw it all, they heard it all, and they touched it all (see Acts 1:21-22). Indeed, with the aroma of broiled fish fresh in the air, they could honestly admit to smelling and tasting as well! How could they withhold their testimony? Would it not be dishonest to hide from the brute facts of the risen Jesus who stood in their midst? The risen Jesus places this obligation on them with his reminder of the great need which only the Good News of his resurrection could remedy: repentance, a change of mind and heart; forgiveness of sins, and at last the release from Israel’s exile. Here was a message worthy not only of Israel but of the whole world: “to all nations” (24:47).

3. **The disciples needed to have an ability which only the power of God could supply (24:49).** Seeing the risen Jesus should have been enough, it would seem, at least on the face of it. Once again, we see the integrity of the narrative. Jesus counsels patient waiting “in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” Though Jesus had plainly shown himself bodily alive, dispelling the notion that they were hallucinating or seeing a ghost, they needed to something more — something able to transfer the power of the risen Jesus to them. Recall the words of Jesus before his death:

¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you (John 14:16-17).

In the presence of the risen Jesus, the Spirit is *with them*, but they require more than spiritual *companionship*: they need spiritual *clothing*. They need to wear the Spirit of God like the shining garments worn by the angels who announced the resurrection to the women.

4. **The disciples needed to replace fear and doubt with joy and worship (24:52).** We are struck by the audacity of the once frightened disciples in these three words: “returned to Jerusalem.” Considering the testimony of the Emmaus pair about “the things that have happened there in these days” (24:18), to return to Jerusalem wouldn’t seem to be the smartest thing to do right now. Especially a *public* return to Jerusalem! Luke writes, “...and were continually in the temple blessing God.” What are we to make of this? Once

hiding behind locked closed doors “for fear of” the Jewish leadership (John 20:19, 26), suddenly the disciples make regular public appearances, celebrating in the Jerusalem temple. How do we explain this dramatic change in demeanor? Is it likely that the disciples invented the story of the risen Jesus who appeared bodily to them after his crucifixion? Would we not expect them to simply slip away into the woodwork, leave town, or go in search of another leader?

“The disciples needed...” We have framed our comments on Luke 24:36-53 with that refrain. Indeed, the followers of Jesus exhibited enormous need after he had suddenly left them to die on the cross. But now he leaves them *again*. Should we not wonder about this second departure? What’s the point of saying he left twice, unless of course, he actually did? What’s even more interesting is the difference in the behavior of the disciples *the second time* he left. Had they lacked the conviction that he was really alive, they should have manifested signs of deep disappointment — that their experience of Jesus after his death came in the form of a cruel joke. “Here he is! No, he’s not!” Yet, that’s not the account Luke offers us. In fact, the manifest evidences of his resurrection have filled the disciples with a confidence which far exceeded anything they had known prior to his death. They exhibit positive signs: “He blessed them...he parted from them...carried up into heaven.” Leaving the second time, Jesus left behind his blessing and his promise, and although Luke would later remind us that the disciples had a moment of perplexity (“Why are you standing here, gazing into heaven,” Acts 1: 11), he would also report how the promise of the Spirit came with power, and how the mission of the Gospel would commence in earnest under their care (Acts 2).

The Meaning of Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:12-23, 35-58)

¹² Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. ¹⁵ We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that 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 futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. ²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. ... ³⁵ But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" ³⁶ You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷ And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. ³⁸ But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. ³⁹ For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. ⁴⁰ There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of 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. ⁴² So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. 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. ⁴⁵ Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. ⁴⁸ As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. ⁴⁹ Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. ⁵⁰ I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹ Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 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 shall be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." ⁵⁵ "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:12-23, 35-58).

When the Gospels talk about the resurrection of Jesus, they do so through the form of stories and narratives. “What did it mean for Jesus of Nazareth to rise from the dead?” usually gets answered by direct reference to people, places and events which came in contact with Jesus after his death. The writers are careful to *locate* the

risen Jesus in certain places, *naming* the people who witnessed him alive or who saw the empty tomb, and telling *how he appeared* to them. To say “Jesus is Risen” in Gospel terms means giving the details of the events connected with him after his death. Capturing the flavor of those events was essential to proclaiming the Good News — the Gospel. As we have already noted, primarily from Luke’s account, there was plenty of material for Luke to download as he crafted the narrative in chapter 24.

In due course, early Christian preachers like Paul would face a host of questions from their audiences about the whole notion of a human being rising from the dead. If we do our homework, as many really fine scholars have done,¹ we discover that belief in life after death during the time of Jesus most likely did not include as a generally accepted the idea that dead people come alive, or even that they *should* come alive again. A few remarks about this skepticism need to preface our discussion of the second reading for this week’s study.

Within the pagan world where Paul had his primary vocation to proclaim the Gospel, life after death meant leaving one’s body and going to a place called *Hades* where souls survive but bodies don’t. A person’s condition in this “under-world” as it was called might vary in its pleasure or pain. That is, assuming there was life after death. Some, like the followers of the philosopher Epicurus, rejected the notion of survival after death. In fact, their master had taught them that one cause of fear in this life was thinking too much about what happens in the next one. His solution? Cut off the cause of fear at its root: don’t believe in life after death. See everything in terms of atoms, motion, chance and lots of empty space. Human beings and stones all have the same chemistry, and when a human life dies, its atoms disperse and rejoin the rest of the material world in a state of constant change.

Of course, there were also the disciples of Socrates and Plato who, like their teachers, looked at death as the liberation of the soul from the prison of the body. Under this interpretation, bodies are best left behind in death. Socrates once called philosophy “the study of death,” because it had to do with freeing the mind, that is the *soul* (Greek: *psuchē*), from the narcotic of the body. Prior to life in this world, he taught that human beings existed as souls in the world of perfect ideas, and from there “fell” into physical bodies for a time where they forgot what they once knew. Philosophy was a kind of therapy, gradually peeling off the fetters of the senses until the mind sees things in light of the eternal forms. When death comes, all becomes clear because the body is no more, and that’s a good thing, while the soul makes its way to the underworld. Guided by this perspective, Platonists (and their sympathizers) had no good reason to embrace belief in the resurrection of the body.

When Paul arrived in the famous Greek city of Athens — home to prominent philosophers — he skillfully wove his preaching with Greek thought at points where both shared common ground (Acts 17:16-34). However, when it came time to “give the invitation” and “come to Jesus,” he gave no ground to pagan thought:

³⁰ The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead” (Acts 17:30-31).

Telling the proud Athenians that they had embraced ignorance took real “intestinal fortitude.” Moreover, telling them “to repent” was paramount to saying that — in spite of their reputation for birthing great thinkers — they needed to “change their minds” (Greek: *metanoia*). Still more shocking was that history was not cyclical, as Greek thought regularly taught it was, but that human beings would need to face “a day” fixed by God when He would finally come to put the world in order and sort out injustice. Such a claim required justification since it ran afoul of what most people thought about the world. Ironically, Paul provides proof in the form of an even more controversial claim: the remedy to the human condition rested with “a man” appointed by God who had walked courageously into death, and then, shockingly, came out the other side alive, having been “raised from the dead.” This, said Paul, is the “assurance” of a hopeful future for the world.

¹ N.T. Wright in his monumental work, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, Fortress Press, 2003.

Paul trusted that God would anoint this message, as He had done a thousand times before. But this was a tough audience, especially when it came to convincing people that dead people rise again. Luke records their reactions:

³² Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this." ³³ So Paul went out from their midst. ³⁴ But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them (Acts 17:32-34.)

The mockers were doubtless either hard-core Epicureans who didn't see anything worthwhile after death, or they were Stoics who admired Socrates, and who saw the body as the prison of the soul and best left behind. However, we have another group who had "open minds," and were willing to "hear" Paul "again about this." Then there were those who "joined him and believed." What are we to make of this? Clearly, the division within Paul's audience reflected the wider culture of Athens where resurrection was simply too irrational to accept. True, the Athenians no doubt knew the Greek idea *anastasis* as it was reflected in the deity with a similar name, *Anastasia*, and whose legends filled the writings of Homer. Earlier, in Aeschylus's play *Eumenides* (647-8), during the founding of the Court of the Areopagus in Athens, the god Apollo himself declares that when a man has died, and his blood is spilt on the ground, there is no resurrection (Greek: *outis est' anastasis*).

To the iron-clad will of the Romans, immortality meant heroism, fame, and a lasting reputation — one which would survive death. Famous people, like the emperors, strove for apotheosis — attaining godhood, sometimes in this life, or at least after death. Such claims provoked ridicule in the ancient world, especially when spoken by men like Nero or Caligula who were most assuredly crazy. This meant nothing to common folk who hoped to make it through this life with their good name intact.

A different picture appears in the life of ancient Israel. If we examine the Scriptures of Judaism, there emerges a portrait of Yahweh, the God of Israel who maintains His covenant with Abraham and his descendents; Who loves David the king and promises him a faithful heir to sit on his throne forever. In celebration of God's faithfulness to His people, David's poet Asaph penned these words some thousand years before Christ:

²³ Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. ²⁴ You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory. ²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. ²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. ²⁷ For behold, those who are far from you shall perish; you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you. ²⁸ But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge, that I may tell of all your works (Psalm 73:23-28).

This psalm is probably the most transparent statement about life after death in the Old Testament.

Life eternal begins in the present, the psalmist tells us, and this confidence rests in this: "I am continually with you; you hold my right hand." In this life, God guides us with his counsel, and then, "afterward," He receives us "to glory." To sharpen this hope, he adds, "Whom have I in heaven but you?" To keep the hope grounded within the physical life of this world, he declares, "And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you." A wonderful union of heaven and earth echoes in these words. Holding to a life-affirming realism, he continues by accepting death, "My flesh and heart may fail", but then trusts his heart to the God who is "his portion forever." Not everybody has this hope, he admits. Some are "far from" God, and they "shall perish." Others, who live unfaithful lives, come to "an end." What then is the key to life after death for the psalmist? "Be near God," he affirms; make "the Lord God" one's refuge; "tell of all" His works.

There is a refreshing continuity in the psalmist's understanding of eternal life. Such life begins in the present within the bodily existence of human beings, persons who are a wondrous union of "flesh and heart." God's relationship to human beings is distinctly tangible: He holds our hand; we desire Him on earth; He guides us here with His counsel. Finally, "afterward," He receives us to glory.

Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (as in Isaiah 26; Ezekiel 37; Daniel 12) the future life is linked to a re-embodied existence. Perhaps Ezekiel 37 best describes this new life in graphic terms, although scholars regularly read the chapter in light of national Israel's rebirth after the Exile. From Daniel, we learn about death as "sleep in the

dust” from which human beings will one day awaken to either everlasting life or everlasting shame. This latter group is harshly described by Isaiah:

They are dead, they will not live; they are shades, they will not arise; to that end you have visited them with destruction and wiped out all remembrance of them (26:14).

By contrast, of the righteous dead, he proclaims:

Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead (Isaiah 26:19).

Notice the tangible, bodily nature of the future life. To say “the dead shall live” means that “their bodies shall rise.” To awaken, is to awaken from “the dust,” having been given birth by “the earth.”

In the Hebrew prophets, then, we find a new hope — an embodied hope that is not allergic to bodies rising from the dust in order to truly live again. Before that time, the Hebrew hope was expressed in language which talked about being “gathered to the fathers” (Genesis 49:29; Judges 2:10; 2 Kings 22:20; 2 Chronicles 34:28). Great care was given to the “bones” of one’s ancestors, making certain that they were buried together, kept in families. For example, Joseph gave explicit instructions to his descendants to bring his bones out of Egypt and back to Canaan (Genesis 50:25) — instructions which Moses honored during the Exodus (Exodus 13:19; also, Joshua 24:32). Scattering bones was a powerful symbolic action indicative of total human destruction (Psalm 53:5; Psalm 141:7; Ezekiel 6:5).

Why all the fuss about bones? The *tzelem* was the most enduring part of the human frame, the symbol of eternal life, in physical terms. When the fragile flesh decayed and dried up, the bones remained. In Jesus’ day, burial was a two stage affair. For nearly a year after a person’s death, his body was kept in a tomb, covered with spices and other agents to suppress the odor of decay. Eventually, only bones remained. These were collected and placed in an *ossuary*, or “bone box,” usually with other deceased family members. To some Jews, all of this was just a practical measure which showed respect for the dead. For others, however, like the Pharisees, a deeper meaning prevailed: keep the family of Israel together in hope of the coming resurrection at the end of days. Some Jews, in the *Diaspora*, arranged to be brought to the hills around Jerusalem to be buried, in expectation of this resurrection.

Paul (Saul of Tarsus) held to such a belief, even before he became a follower of Jesus. However, he, like the others who held to a belief in resurrection, didn’t expect it to happen until the end of all things when God would finally put the whole world to rights and restore all things. Nobody expected an exceptional resurrection before that time. And that’s where the Christian version of resurrection makes some significant alterations to the Jewish belief. At the center of these modifications is the proclamation that an exceptional resurrection had indeed taken place, not at the end of history, but in the middle of it; not to a whole group of the righteous, but to one man: Jesus of Nazareth, “the man” whom God “appointed” to make all things right (see Acts 17 and our discussion above).

Which brings us to this week’s second reading. We have excerpted two separate sections from the longer 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians. Widely known as the resurrection chapter, it talks about the idea of resurrection in terms of both Jesus and his followers. The key here is the word “first fruits” which is applied to Jesus’ resurrection. This harvest metaphor, well-known in an agrarian society, underscores the precedent set by Jesus’ rising from the dead and its significance for the future resurrection of his followers. Yet another issue addressed in this chapter is whether resurrection can happen at all. As we have noted above, plenty of pagans rejected the possibility (or desirability) of resurrection, content instead to simply survive as a soul in *Hades*, perhaps sharing the companionship of the great heroes of Greek-Roman legends, or, simply ceasing to be. Paul had to work this argument backwards, pointing out that if Christians are going to preach the risen Jesus as the Good News (Gospel), they could hardly deny the possibility of resurrection of human beings on philosophical grounds!

That's basically the line of reasoning in 1 Corinthians 15:12-19. Paul essentially works out the severe implications of denying *any resurrection* at all, through a series of "if ... then" statements, written like a rhetorician making an argument in a law court. The chapter begins with a reminder of what the Gospel is, namely, the royal proclamation that "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he was seen..." (15:3-8). Paul calls this account of the Gospel "of first importance" (Greek: *prōtos*). Prior to this statement, he reminds the Corinthians some things about this Gospel: 1) Paul preached it to them; 2) they received it; 3) they have taken their stand on it; 4) they are saved by it (15:1-2). What's at risk, he tells them, is that they might fail to "hold firmly to it," thus rendering their faith null and void. In other words, the Gospel, which includes the proclamation that Jesus was raised from the dead, cannot be deconstructed without serious implications to personal and corporate faith. What's at stake? From 15:14-19, we learn the domino effect of preemptively denying the possibility of resurrection from the dead. Paul's reasoning looks like this:

1. **If Christ is not raised.** Here is the central implication. No resurrection *at all* implies no resurrection in particular. In logic, this is known as the rule of instantiation, applied, in this case, to a universal denial. Thus, "If no human beings can rise from the dead; Jesus is a human being; therefore, Jesus cannot rise from the dead." In contemporary terms, if we buy into an uncritical materialism, one which rules out any possibility of the dead rising, we are driven to the logical conclusion that not even Christ was raised from the dead. What follows from this denial are further implications. If Christ was not raised from the dead, then ...
2. **Our preaching is useless,** leaving human beings without a remedy for sin. What's the point of preaching the Gospel of the resurrection, especially at the risk of life and limb, if dead people don't rise; if Christ didn't rise? If we are left in sin, then we are left in slavery, bereft of freedom and liberating life.
3. **We are false witnesses.** In the ancient world, this was a serious legal infraction, carrying severe penalties. Jewish law, starting with the Ten Commandments, condemned this offence of being a "false witness" in the harshest of terms. However, the resurrection of Jesus, according to 15:5-8, rested on the testimony of many witnesses. Paul may be suggesting that the likelihood of all the witnesses being false is remote, and so he works the argument conversely. "But we can't all be false witnesses..."
4. **Those who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.** Paul may have in mind not only those who have simply died *as Christians*, but also those who have died *because they were Christians*, that is, the martyrs. What sense would it make to die for something that is patently untrue or which lacks credible evidence and reliable witnesses?
5. **Hope would only be for this life.** This argument is not intended to minimize the value of life on earth. Paul probably meant *life as it is*, unaltered by the restorative remedy of the resurrection. If nothing really gets changed because resurrection isn't possible, then Christ cannot change *this life*, because he has not been raised either. Of course, more is meant. Resurrection is suppose to reach beyond this life, into death and beyond. Without resurrection, hopelessness returns to the human condition, death remains king, and we Christians who think otherwise ought to be pitied as deluded and in denial.

Then in 15:20-23, Paul turns the negative around and makes it into a positive. To set this out in logical form, we begin with the skeptics claim:

Premise: There is no resurrection of the dead (A).

Inference: Christ has not been raised (B).

In standard inferential notation: $A \supset B$

Paul then applies the logical rule of *modus tollens*: $\sim B$

Which yields the conclusion: $\sim A$.

Putting this all together, we have a complete syllogism:

$A \supset B$

$\sim B$

$\therefore \sim A$

The negation of the statement “Christ has not been raised” ($\sim B$), is equivalent to the positive statement “Christ has been raised” (15:20), since the negation of a negation is an affirmation. Once Paul makes that move, he can logically go on to falsify the statement “There is no resurrection of the dead,” having found a single exception to the skeptic’s universal rule. The particularity of Christ’s resurrection implies the possibility of resurrection in general. On principle, resurrection cannot be rejected if a single case of resurrection has been verified.

But Paul is not satisfied to rest with a logical nicety. He presses beyond it to open up a new hope that if Christ has been raised, he becomes the precedent-setting “first fruits,” with the expectation that more persons like him will be raised from the dead — eventually. Appealing to the analogy of Adam, he extends the argument to Christ. If one human being dies (Adam), then other human beings can (and do) die. By the same token, if one human being can be raised from the dead, then other human beings can be raised also. Besides the logical consistency of Paul’s argument, there is also the Jewish idea of *corporate solidarity* which applies the properties of one person to the group of which he is the *head* and to which all the other members belong. When the New Testament uses the language “in Christ,” it is employing corporate solidarity language to Christ and His people. The phrases, “in Abraham,” or “in Adam” have similar meanings.

Having disposed of the general statement, “The dead are not raised,” by appealing to the historical fact of the resurrection of Jesus, Paul turns to another pressing question: “*How* are the dead raised?” (15:35-58). If the *idea* of people being raised from the dead was puzzling to Paul’s pagan audience, so was the meaning of “bodily resurrection.” Bear in mind that the Christian claim is not just telling people that their *souls* are going to heaven at death; it is going further by promising the restoration of a full human life, including the possession of a new body. But what does this mean? On this query, the Corinthians fumble a bit. Our text contains two questions: 1) “how” are the dead raised (Greek: *pōs*); 2) with “what” kind of body? (Greek: *poios*). That is, “What is the *agency* which makes the resurrection happen?” and “What is the *composition* of the body itself?” We only know one kind of body, and it’s the one *we are*. For those who thought with a Greek frame of reference, such a body is laid aside at death, allowing the soul inside either to be dispersed into the elements of the universe (Epicureanism) or to make its way to *Hades* where life after death continued the person’s existence without the body.

In response, Paul chides them for hastily objecting to the method and means of resurrection, as he begins his response in 15:36.

1. He calls his audience *aphrōn* — senseless, ignorant, unlearned (15:36a). We’d probably use the colloquial, “You dummy!” or, “Hey, stupid!” Paul does not intend ridicule but offers a light-hearted sarcasm to the questioner. Literally, the word means “without thought.” Classical usage includes the ideas “silly, crazy, frantic.” What Paul does not call his skeptic is the more provocative “moron” (Greek: *mōros*).
2. Paul relies on a series of metaphors and other figures of speech to explain what the resurrection body is like, and how it comes into existence. He begins with the image of the “seed.” Our life is like the cycle of a seed: upon planting in the soil, the seed undergoes what appears to be a kind of death before it actually germinates, sprouts, and grows from the ground. Paul seems to be saying that when we plant a physical seed, it dies, but then something physical comes to life again out of it. That is, nature has ample examples of physical death followed by real tangible physical life, not by non-physical existence. Seeds don’t become souls upon death, but rather grow up as fully physical plants (15:36b)
3. Tracing the seed imagery further in 15:37, Paul notes that the physical form of the seed *changes* throughout its life-cycle. The sown seed is a “bare kernel” belonging to some family of grain, such as wheat. What grows out of the ground doesn’t look like what was planted in the ground, though it shares with it some physical continuity, and is still *wheat*.
4. Invoking the idea of God-given “kinds” (see Genesis 1), the text goes on to say that God gives each seed its own body *as a seed*, and He also gives to each seed its own body *which grows from the seed*. That is, God the Creator remains actively connected to the nature of plant-bearing seeds. (15:38).
5. At this juncture, the metaphor shifts from plants to animals, as Paul catalogs the various forms of animal “flesh” (Greek: *sarx*): human, mammals, birds, fish, etc. (15:39).

6. Reaching into the heavens, the text borrows imagery from the *heavenly bodies*, such as sun, moon and stars (15:40-41), noting that each has a different intensity of what Paul calls its “glory,” from the Greek word *doxa* meaning, in the case, “splendor, effulgence.” The root idea is “seems,” leading to the concept of “opinion, appearance.” We don’t all “see” these light-bearing bodies in the same way, Paul tells his audience, as even the stars differ from each other in their appearance. They are, however, still considered to be *sōmata epourania* — “heavenly bodies” in the astronomical heavens. The writer does not attribute spiritual or supernatural existence to these objects but sees them as belonging to the realm of “bodies” (Greek: *sōma*).
7. All of these metaphors having to do with physical objects point in a single direction: there is incredible diversity within the physical world. It would not be difficult, therefore, to imagine that what happens to a person after death could also involve the formation of yet another physical body, but with a completely different physical appearance or *glory*. The physical world is rich with possibilities, especially when the hand of God rests on it — the hand of God the Creator. The same Creator God who brought the old creation into existence has already begun the work of “new creation.”
8. “So it is with the resurrection of the dead” (15:42). At this juncture, Paul brings the argument home, and cashes in on the various metaphors which preceded this statement. A series of additional assertions follow, each on explaining in what sense the resurrection produces a new kind of body:

<u>How Sown (“bare grain”)</u>	<u>How Raised (flowering plant)</u>	<u>1 Corinthians 15</u>
Perishable	Imperishable	(15:42)
Dishonor	Glory	(15:43a)
Weakness	Power	(15:43b)
Natural Body	Spiritual Body	(15:44)

What’s important to note is that two kinds of bodies are specifically mentioned, and in both cases the same word *soma* (Greek for “body”) is used. We are not talking about body and soul as entirely different dimensions of human life, as if at death we drop the body and keep the soul. Resurrection is not about souls surviving death, but about the transformation of our present life into a whole new life, no less physical than this one, but exceeding it in wonderful ways. As the chart above shows, the old life is perishable, dishonorable, weak and natural, but the new life is imperishable, glorious, powerful and spiritual.

As if to underscore the point made by his enumeration of the various metaphors (seed, flesh, heavenly bodies), Paul says there are two kinds of bodies: natural and spiritual. What does he mean?

If we examine the underlying Greek terms for each kind of body, the following results emerge.

1. The phrase *sōma psuchikon* literally means “soul-body” or perhaps, “soulish body.” The word for soul, *psuchē*, lies behind the adjective used in 15:44, “pertaining to soul.” Ordinarily, “soul” refers to “mind, self,” and has to do with the permanent part of human nature surviving death. Ironically, Paul plays with the meaning a bit here, and demotes soul from its honored place as an immortal dimension, as opposed to the body. When body (*sōma*) is described as *psuchikon*, it is actually an inferior grade of human nature, namely, the one which we possess *before we die*.

Paul explains his use of this expression in 15:45, but he does so in light of the Hebrew ideas found in the Old Testament. There he talks about “the first man Adam was made a living soul.” This is a direct reference to Genesis 2:7, “God formed the human (Hebrew: *’ādām*) from the dust of the ground (*’ādāmāh*), breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the human became a living soul (*nephesh*).” The Hebrew word for soul has a different meaning than the Greek idea known to Paul’s audience. Strictly speaking, *psuchē* is not *nephesh*. For the Greeks, human beings *have souls*; in Hebrew terms, human beings *are living souls*. Paul wants to find the intersection of meaning between these two expressions so that his audience can make sense of the two phrases describing two different kinds of bodies.

“Soul” body is biologically-based, blood-based existence. We know this from Leviticus 17:11:

For the life (*nephesh*="soul") of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls (*nephesh*, pl.), for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life (*nephesh*).

Life dependent on the presence of blood in the body is "soul" life. The body which is animated by the presence of blood is "soul body." When the Torah says "the soul of the flesh is in the blood," it does so in order to explain why blood is used in atonement rituals. It represents the life of the body.

Paul, by calling our bodies "soul bodies" is fully in synch with this understanding. Drain the blood from the body through a wound or other injury and human beings die. That's why the common way of talking about murder was "shedding blood" from the Hebrew *shāphak dam* which means "pour out blood" (see Genesis 9:6 and elsewhere). Similarly, we have the phrase "pour out his soul to death" in Isaiah 53:12. The soul (*nephesh*) is the principle of life for anyone who is a descendent of the first human Adam.

2. But, says Paul, there is a second kind of body and, in conjunction with it, a new Adam. He calls this body a *sōma pneumatikon* or "spiritual body." We must be careful at this point when we see "spiritual" not to miss "body." Some people read "spiritual body" and then take a huge leap into thinking Paul is talking about the spirit which survives death, when in fact that's exactly what he is not saying. Spiritual body is, after all, *body* but, as noted above, *of a different kind*. Just like seeds, animals, and stars, bodies are real, tangible physical things, though they *differ from each other* in their appearance ("glory") and character. The resurrection *body* is of a different kind from the one we have now. Our present body descends from the first Adam who was created a "living soul." Therefore, it is a first-Adam body, Version 1.0!

There is, however, a second kind of body, and it comes from the new Adam (Paul calls him "last Adam" or "second Adam"), Version *Final Release!* In 15:45b, the resurrection body of Jesus is called a "life-giving spirit" body. That is, the principle of life is the Spirit, not soul-in-the blood. Without dissecting the narrative too much, we see intimations of this in Jesus' words to the disciples after his resurrection, cited in our first reading above:

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 (Luke 24:39).

Jesus did not say "flesh and blood," but rather "flesh and bones" which, he said, "I have." We also have a perfect illustration of the difference between a "spirit being" and a "spiritual body." Notice the contrast: "a *spirit* does not have ..." but "flesh and bones I have." A spirit could be an angel, for example, but angels do not have physical bodies. Jesus insists here that he does have a physical body, but a body unlike the one he had before he died. Having "shed his blood," offering it as atonement for the soul-based lives of human beings, Jesus was raised from the dead by the Spirit.

The resurrected body of Jesus, the *sōma pneumatikon*, is a body animated and empowered by the Holy Spirit rather than by the natural processes of his pre-resurrection body. Paul elsewhere writes about the role of the Spirit in both Jesus and our resurrections:

If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you (Romans 8:11).

Notice how the raising of Jesus and us involves the Spirit "dwelling within" the body, giving life to the "mortal bodies" (*ta thnēta sōmata*). Twice, Paul emphasizes that the Spirit animates the resurrected body.

This body is a physical body to be sure, but one which has been transformed. Some scholars, like N.T. Wright, refer to it as a *transformed physicality* or *transphysicality*.² As the Gospel accounts illustrate, the resurrected Jesus could appear inside locked rooms, eat fish, disappear suddenly, and move from place to place nearly instantaneously. He could be touched by human beings with natural bodies. The physical properties required to permit these activities are quite different from those possessed by the *sōma psuchikon*.

² *Jesus' Resurrection. Then and Now*. Video Series. N. T. Wright. Tabgha Foundation, Minneapolis. Available from CARES (Center for Advanced Religious External Studies), P.O. Box 863, Forest, VA, 24551. 800-665-2149.

What's important to garner from this discussion is that both types of bodies Paul mentions are *physical*. The contrast in 15:44-45 is not between being a body and being a disembodied spirit. Rather, the two bodies differ in *how they are made alive (animated)*: 1) natural bodies live through biological processes involving, among other things, blood; 2) spiritual bodies live through spiritual processes involving the Holy Spirit as the supreme agent of animation. Paul proceeds to unpack this distinction further in 15:47-50 using additional contrasts:

First Man: Adam	Second Man: Jesus
From the earth, a man “of dust” (<i>choikos</i>) His offspring are “of dust” We bear the image (<i>eikōn</i>) of the man of dust Flesh and blood Perishable	From heaven (<i>epouranios</i>) His followers are “of heaven” We will bear the image of the man “of heaven” Kingdom of heaven Imperishable

Paul's next task is to tell his audience how this new kind of body will come into existence at some time in the future. The body of Jesus is already an historical reality, having become “the man from heaven” through his resurrection and having ascended to heaven where he reigns with the Father and the Spirit. However, his presence in heaven in no way suggests he shows no interest in earth, or what happens to earthly humans. As the *Our Father* prayer reminds us, we seek God's will on earth as it now is in heaven. God's will for human beings, as well as for His whole creation, is that they be restored and become part of His New Creation. The long-term burden of that plan appears in Revelation 21-22, and this hope is reflected in the “groaning of Nature” described in Romans 8:18-23. What is now true of Jesus will one day become true for us.

So remarkable are the circumstances under which we will receive our new bodies that Paul speaks of them as part of a “mystery” (Greek: *musterion*). This term indicates something once hidden, unknown or not understood which will eventually be revealed, known and comprehended. Paul tells his audience that he is pulling aside just a little the curtain which hides this mystery so that they might know the wonderful hope which lies in their future — the hope of a *spiritual body*, raised from the dead. Several key points follow:

1. Death is hereafter referred to as *sleep*. This is not because human souls are sleeping, but because human bodies are “sleeping in the dust,” waiting for the moment of *their awakening*. Such language can be found in the Old Testament, especially in Daniel 12:2, where the future glory of God's people “shines like the brightness of sky and the stars,” having been “wakened from the dust.”
2. What does it mean for a dead body sleeping in the dust to awaken? According to 15:51b, it means to be “changed,” presumably into a spiritual body, the *sōma pneumatikon*. The word “change” derives from the Greek word *allassō* which means “alter, transform, exchange.” This last option implies exchanging the natural body for the spiritual one. In the resurrection, a transaction occurs in which we trade in our present bodies, *regardless of their condition*, for new ones. Just as the resurrection body of Jesus “used up” the matter of his old body when he rose from the dead, leaving the tomb empty, so at our resurrection we exchange our body of dust for a body of glory.
3. How does this change take place? Several phrases are piled up in 15:52 emphasizing the suddenness of the *change* when it happens, as well as locating it at the arrival of the *eschaton*: “the last trumpet.” This is standard apocalyptic language for the end of time when God comes to finish the work of creation and redemption. Similar trumpet language appears in Matthew 24:31 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16 in connection with the *parousia*, the second “coming” of Jesus. Throughout *Revelation* a series of trumpet events unfold leading up to the seventh or last trumpet (see Revelation 8:7-8, 10, 12; 9:1, 13-14, 10:7; 11:15). The passage from 10:7 is especially instructive: “But that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.” Notice the use of the word “mystery” which comports with Paul's use in 15:51 and points to the “fulfillment” of God's plan.
 - a. “in a moment”
 - b. “in the twinkling of an eye”
 - c. “at the last trumpet”
 - d. “the trumpet will sound”

e. “the dead will be raised incorruptible”

f. “we shall be changed”

The text elaborates further with more complete explanations, noting what happens during this climactic event and telling the audience what resurrection of the body will mean.

g. “the perishable body must put on the imperishable”

h. “the mortal body must put on immortality”

It’s important to see that the word “immortal” has to do with the transformation of the *whole person* and is not limited or even applied to the soul by itself. What makes Christian belief unique is not that it teaches the immortality of the soul — something believed by even the pagan religions. Our hope does not rest on some intrinsic quality of human nature in its present form, namely, that a little piece of God-stuff stuck inside of us is going to survive death and carry us into heaven. The promise Paul lays before his audience is much more profound and powerful: Christ gives us an immortal *body* in the resurrection so that we will become transformed whole persons, destined to live that way forever in God’s New Heaven and New Earth.

What happens to us between death and the Second Coming when resurrection happens is an entirely temporary arrangement, and it is not our final destination. Controversies about soul sleep, purgatory, limbo, annihilation and the like all miss the point. We believe in “the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting,” as the Creed tells us, and this is in keeping with the tenor of 1 Corinthians 15. We know that during that brief interlude we are “absent from the body and present with the Lord” (1 Corinthians 5:6-8), and that we wait for the “clothing” of our old person with the new one. It is this we anticipate with great joy.

British particle physicist and theologian, John Polinghorne, was awarded the Templeton Prize in 2002 for his work on science and religion. He suggests that at death God uploads our personal selves (“souls”) into His loving mind and heart until the time of the resurrection when He then downloads them into new hardware, namely, our resurrection bodies. He calls this “re-instantiation in the re-embodied resurrection life.”³

The crowning proclamation of the whole chapter comes in 15:54 where Paul includes some quotations from the Hebrew Bible which have as their center-piece the word “victory” (Greek: *nikos*), a term with strong military and battle-scene connotations. Death is the warrior which Sin has deployed into God’s original creation. Earlier in the chapter (15:26) Death was called “the last enemy.” The resurrection of Jesus broke the grip which Death held on Sin ravaged Earth, and this became the great announcement of D-Day. When the last trumpet sounds, the final battle will be fought and won, bringing V-Day to the whole of God’s creation. Paul uses potent language to describe the defeat of Death: “swallowed up in victory.” Life will devour death. The writer takes his cue from Isaiah 25:8, “He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord Yahweh will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for Yahweh has spoken.”

In 15:55 we have a classic taunt formula, based on Hosea 13:14, where Death and the Place of the Dead (*sheol*) are held up to ridicule, as the writer asks “where is your victory... your sting?” The taunt is followed by a resounding word of thanksgiving: “Thanks be to God for giving us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” The basis for the Eucharist — the Great Thanksgiving — is the victory secured by Jesus Christ the Lord. We come to the altar and receive the elements with joyful gratitude because the resurrection of Jesus means victory for us.

It is common practice to separate 15:58 from the rest of the chapter. That is a mistake, especially since the verse begins, in the English translations, with “Therefore...” As it turns out, the underlying Greek word is not the familiar *gar* (“for”) or *oun* (“then”), but *hōste* which signals a “result” clause to follow. In other words,

³*The God of Hope and the End of the World*, Yale University Press, 2003, pp. 107-111.

everything that Paul has taught about the resurrection leads to a final, climactic and practical result in the lives of God's people. When *hōste* appears at the beginning of a sentence, as it does here, it marks a strong conclusion, and that is why "therefore" is the way it is usually translated. However, we mustn't lose the force of the result clause. What sort of consequences does Paul envision for those who will be resurrected?

1. He addresses his audience with the phrase "my brothers, beloved" (Greek: *adelphoi mou agapētoi*). Resurrection hope strengthens the bonds of love in the family of God. We are the special objects of God's love, and He makes this clear by transforming us through resurrection life. The phrase appears elsewhere:
 - a. 2 Thessalonians 2:13: Paul thanks God for the "brothers beloved" because God has chosen them as "the first fruits to be saved."
 - b. *James* uses the phrase three times (1:16, 19; 2:5) and places emphasis on God's *choice* of His people who are presently poor, but have become "rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which he promised to those who love him."
2. Paul then gives the expected results of believing in the resurrection of our bodies, and he does so with four distinct affirmations, introducing them with the verb *ginesthe* which means "become," used here as an exhortation or command to action.
 - a. "Steadfast" (Greek: *hedraioi*): Used commonly of a rider seated firmly on his mount, the term suggests steadiness, not likely to be unseated or dismounted.
 - b. "Immovable" (Greek: *ametakinētos*): The word is a compound which consists of: *a*=not + *meta*=change + *kineō*=to move. Combined, these terms have to do with maintaining the present state of motion. Since *kineō* has to do with active movement (compare our word "kinetic"), the word denotes "not changing the state of motion." The emphasis is not on remaining stationary, not moving at all, but on real motion that is unimpeded, unchanged and unhindered.
 - c. "Abounding in the work of the Lord always" (Greek: *perisseuontes en tō ergō tou kuriou pantote*). The lead verb is from *perisseuō* which means "to be over and above, more than enough, have the advantage." Interestingly, it also has a military connotation: "to outflank." "The work" is from the root *ergon* used in Homer often for "deeds of war," but can also refer to the works of industry, agriculture, and other occupations. The emphasis falls on what *has been achieved*; that which is *done* which cannot easily be *undone*.
 - d. "Knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (*eidotes hoti ho kopos humōn ouk estin kenos en kuriō*). What sort of "knowing" is this? The primary root is *eidō* and has to do with what is *seen* or with what *appears*. The ideas of "perceive, show" also apply. If we know in this way, we are actually seeing the thing known not just thinking about it or reasoning about. What is that we know by seeing? Paul uses the word *kopos* to describe the sort of work which makes a person *tired*. It is *hard work*, often involving suffering and trouble. It is *toil* bringing on fatigue. Curiously (and in keeping with the military imagery of this verse), the basic meaning involves "beating, striking," the sorts of actions expected during a fierce battle. Such "labor" might lead us to ask, "Is it worth it?" to which Paul responds, that "this work is not in vain in the Lord." The word for "vain" is *kenos* which literally means "empty." We do not come back from such hard work empty-handed.

These observations lead us to see a powerful military metaphor involving a soldier firmly seated on his steed, advancing across the field unimpeded, outflanking the enemy, showing good result for his fiercely fought labor, and not coming back empty-handed. The enemy is, of course, Death itself, who has been defeated by the resurrection of Jesus and will be at last driven off the field at the last trumpet. Whatever we do, however fierce the struggle, wherever the enemy strikes us, our confidence rests in this assurance that the things we do will last into the resurrection of God's Great Day. N.T. Wright has summed this up beautifully:

[T]he present bodily life is not valueless just because it will die. God will raise it to new life. What you do with your body in the present matters because God has a great future in store for it. ... [T]his applies to the various vocations to which God's people are called. What you do in the present — by painting, preaching, singing, sewing, praying, teaching, building hospitals, digging wells, campaigning for justice, writing poems, caring for the needy, loving your neighbor as yourself — will last into God's future. These activities are not simply ways of making the present life a

little less beastly, a little more bearable, until the day when we leave it behind altogether. ... They are part of what we may call *building for God's kingdom*. ...

You are not oiling the wheels of a machine that's about to roll over a cliff. You are not restoring a great painting that's shortly going to be thrown on the fire. You are not planting roses in a garden that's about to be dug up for a building site. You are — strange though it may seem, almost as hard to believe as the resurrection itself — accomplishing something that will become in due course part of God's new world. Every act of love, gratitude, and kindness; every work of art or music inspired by the love of God and delight in the beauty of his creation; every minute spent teaching a severely handicapped child to read or to walk; every act of care and nurture, of comfort and support, for one's fellow human beings and for that matter one's fellow nonhuman creatures; and of course every prayer, all Spirit-led teaching, every deed that spreads the gospel, builds up the church, embraces and embodies holiness rather than corruption, and makes the name of Jesus honored in the world — all of this will find its way, through the resurrecting power of God, into the new creation that God will one day make. That is the logic of the mission of God. God's re-creation of his wonderful world, which began with the resurrection of Jesus and continues mysteriously as God's people live in the risen Christ and in the power of his Spirit, means that what we do in Christ and by the Spirit in the present is not wasted. It will last all the way into God's new world. In fact, it will be enhanced there.⁴

Touching Eternal Life (1 John 1:1-4)

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life-² the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us-³ that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.⁴ And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

The Greeks referred to the place of their dead as *Hades*, literally, “the shades, shadows, unseen.” For the Hebrews, afterlife meant *she'ol*, “the grave, place which *asks* for more.” The former meaning slips through your fingers as an insubstantial and hard to grasp reality. The latter designation may seem a bit too tangible, borrowing the image of a great beast devouring the dead and never having enough. Somewhere between the Greek *hades* and the Hebrew *she'ol* lies the truth of eternal life.

In John's first letter (*1 John*) we are introduced from the outset to things which have their roots “from the beginning” (*ho ēn ap' archēs*). Much like the *Gospel of John*, the letter takes us back to *Genesis* and the idea of creation, the place where all things began. Creation is God's project, brought to an intermediate completion in the primordial past, interrupted by sin and human death, but now advanced once more and back on track because Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Eternal life is not about God abandoning His earthly cosmic project and starting over in another distant place called heaven. Had that been the case, resurrecting Jesus to renewed bodily life would make no sense. Why not just take Jesus to heaven, without his body, and then call the rest of us up there when we die? Done, end of story.

But that's not what happened two thousand years ago. Jesus entered human history as a real human being precisely so that he might re-start the original creation project and bring it to completion. This is the story of New Creation, not the story of De-Creation. The last chapters of the Bible end, not with the *removal* of earth but with the *renewal* of both heaven and earth as a single unified reality. And we have the resurrection of Jesus Christ to thank for making that eventuality possible, the “first-fruits” foreshadowing more of the same to come.

When John begins his first letter with references to “beginning,” he purposely draws his audience back to this original project so that he can carry them forward to its fresh renewal. To do so, he uses concrete sensory language — sensuous language which engages “hearing, seeing, gazing and touching.” These are not pretty metaphors intended to sentimentalize the story he's trying to tell. He wants the reader to truly *grasp* the eternal life he tells them about. Perhaps the hearing and seeing elements are the easiest to accept. After all, Jesus

⁴ From his excellent treatment of the future life, *Surprised by Hope*, New York: Harper Collins, 2008, pp. 193, 208-209.

spoke and people heard him, even marveling at his “gracious words.” People saw him perform mighty works, healing the sick, walking on water, and feeding the multitudes. They were drawn to his words and dazzled by his works. Why does John press his witness further by talking about “touching”?

“Touched with our hands” is the way John says this. In the Greek: *hai cheires hēmōn epsēlaphēsan*. The verb for “touch” is *psēlaphaō*, applied to a person *groping about* like a blind man or a person in the dark, feeling for something tangible so that he can find his way. Generally, it means “to feel or touch.” We were, John remembers, like blind men walking about in the darkness, and then we met Jesus.⁵ At first we heard, then we saw, but finally we touched. What did we touch? What did we grasp and handle? It was “the word of life” (*peri tou logou tēs zōēs*). This language reminds us of the accounts in *Luke* and *John*, “handle me and see...,” where Jesus invites a thorough investigation of his resurrection body, leaving no doubt that it was physically real but wonderfully changed.

“The life was caused to appear,” says the Greek of 1 John 1:2 (*ephanerōthē*, aorist tense — decisive action in the past). Here is the resurrection in all its glory, described as “life caused to appear” in the form of the new creation, the resurrection body of Jesus. This body they saw with their eyes. The word for “saw” is the term which suggests simple vision (*horaō*, “to see, take notice, perceive”). For the disciples, it was ordinary vision at first, even mistaking Jesus for a stranger or a gardener. But John advances the meaning of this vision with the word *martureō* — giving testimony to what was seen. How do the disciples move from “taking notice” to “bearing witness”? To answer that question, we look at yet another word for “see” found in 1:1, namely, *theaomai*, which means “to gaze, behold, look on,” even “to reconnoiter.” That is a more intense form of vision, one which, among other things, does not stop with ordinary sight but takes the initiative “to touch” in order to verify the reality of what has been seen. From such a confirming vision the original disciples framed a confident witness that Jesus Christ was the embodiment of eternal life — standing in their midst.

“We proclaim...” Twice John uses the Greek word *apaggellō*, both times in the present tense. Commonly used of a messenger who brings “tidings, reports, and announcements,” it can also refer to a speaker or writer who relates or narrates events. This is paramount to saying, “We are willing *to go on record* with what we have seen, heard, and touched — Jesus the risen Lord — to whom we bear witness with a continuous announcement of his resurrection life.” “Proclaim” suggests something formal and official, based on a confident testimony of facts in evidence. Authority lies behind proclamation, as would have been the case had the Emperor himself sent his messenger to announce one of his decrees.

Telling the story of the risen Jesus, then, took the form of a royal proclamation. But for what purpose did the early witnesses announce the resurrection of Jesus? Were they drumming up business for a new religion? Was it a sanitized version of “We told you so!” after the relentless doubt and opposition of the Jewish leadership? Frankly, we have to say *no*. Instead, the writer uses the proclamation *to invite* his audience to become part of a new society, a new humanity, birthed from the hope of the resurrected Jesus, and shaped by the start of God’s New Creation. The word John uses to say all of this is *koinonia*, usually translated “fellowship.” In classical usage, the Greek word had a range of meaning: “communion, association, partnership, and fellowship.” We’re tempted to think about Tolkien’s fictionalized “Fellowship of the Ring” which launched his *Lord of the Rings*! In that fantasy world, the Fellowship was a new partnership. In our case, the reality lies with the power of the risen Jesus to forge a new community which draws its life from the very life of God Himself.

⁵ The story of ancient Israel includes the metaphor of blindness and darkness: “and you shall grope at noonday, as the blind grope in darkness, and you shall not prosper in your ways. And you shall be only oppressed and robbed continually, and there shall be no one to help you” (Deuteronomy 28:29); “In that day the deaf shall hear the words of a book, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see” (Isaiah 29:18); “to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness ... And I will lead the blind in a way that they do not know, in paths that they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I do, and I do not forsake them” (Isaiah 42:7, 16).

Proclamation creates fellowship between the Herald and those he calls. But John hastens to add that the real bonds of *koinonia* lie with “the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ” (Greek: *meta patros kai meta tou hiou autou Iēsou Christou*). Since God has raised Jesus from the dead, the fresh bonds of the new humanity take their strength from the loving act of Jesus’ resurrection. The risen Jesus, the new Adam, means the promise of our resurrection. In the present, the earthly sign that we too shall be raised is found in none other than the “Fellowship of the Risen Jesus,” his body, the church. We are the church of the resurrection, where the body of Christ takes shape in fellowship with one another, and with Father and Son.

The distinctive feature of the Fellowship of the Risen Jesus is joy. As we have noted in previous studies, “joy” (Greek: *chara*) is *celebratory expectation*. We celebrate in light of God’s coming kingdom, His New Creation born at Easter, and in the hope that “the sufferings of this present time” will be swallowed up in everlasting life. John wants this joy to *be fulfilled* (Greek: *plēroō*), that is, to *fill up the cup* of our lives in the completion of God’s creation project. Resurrection results in renewed community, joyfully proclaiming the real substantial hope that one day all things will be made new (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Concluding Thoughts

From an unexpected source comes ardent support for the *bodily* resurrection of Jesus. Penned by Pulitzer Prize winning poet, John Updike, the following poem challenges us to take the daring step of actually believing that Jesus rose in a *transformed physical body* when he was resurrected from the dead. Updike refuses to drift away into sentimental metaphor the factuality of that first Easter. Allow the boldness of these verses to sink their realism into your hearts, and perhaps nurture a robust faith worthy of the mighty stone rolled away from the empty tomb.

Seven Stanzas of Easter

By John Updike

Make no mistake: if He rose at all
it was as His body;
if the cells' dissolution did not reverse, the molecules
reknit, the amino acids rekindle,
the Church will fall.

It was not as the flowers,
each soft Spring recurrent;
it was not as His Spirit in the mouths and fuddled
eyes of the eleven apostles;
it was as His Flesh: ours.

The same hinged thumbs and toes,
the same valved heart
that — pierced — died, withered, paused, and then
regathered out of enduring Might
new strength to enclose.

Let us not mock God with metaphor,
analogy, sidestepping transcendence;
making of the event a parable, a sign painted in the

faded credulity of earlier ages:
let us walk through the door.

The stone is rolled back, not papier-mache,
not a stone in a story,
but the vast rock of materiality that in the slow
grinding of time will eclipse for each of us
the wide light of day.

And if we will have an angel at the tomb,
make it a real angel,
weighty with Max Planck's quanta, vivid with hair,
opaque in the dawn light, robed in real linen
spun on a definite loom.

Let us not seek to make it less monstrous,
for our own convenience, our own sense of beauty,
lest, awakened in one unthinkable hour, we are
embarrassed by the miracle,
and crushed by remonstrance.

“*Telephone Poles*” and *Other Poems* (New York:
Alfred A. Knopf, 1961).

Indeed, *Let us not mock God with metaphor ... let us walk through the door* — and believe.

Glory to God! Amen.

Digger Deeper: A Case for Christ-Lent 2010: Jesus as Body Resurrected
(Bob Brown)

To gain a deeper understanding of *A Case for Christ-Lent 2010: Jesus as Body Resurrected*, carefully read the selected passages below. To aid you in your study, we invite you to visit the website <http://notes.chicagofirstnaz.org>, or pick up a copy of the *Background Notes* at the **Information** desk, or from your ABF leader. Now consider the following questions, as you ask the Lord to teach you.

1. How do you think most people think about life after death? What do you think about it? What did the church teach you about it?
2. Read Luke 24:36-53. Take a few moments to review the opening sections of Luke 24 as background for the reading. Make a simple outline of the whole chapter, with greater detail given to this reading. What major affirmation is found in 24:23 which lies at the center of the whole chapter?
3. Does this passage have the “look and feel” of a vision, a dream or real events unfolding before the disciples? Explain your answer with specific phrases or words in the text. Do you think the disciple knew the difference?
4. What did Jesus ask the disciples to do in order to dispel their disbelief that he was a real person and not a ghost (24:37-41)? What does that imply about the nature of Jesus’ resurrection body? Why did Jesus refer to “flesh and bones” and not “flesh and blood” when referring to his body?
5. Did it appear that the disciples were expecting to see Jesus alive in a bodily form? What might have hindered them from seeing him in this way?
6. According to 24:45-47, what did Jesus specifically need to do for the disciples which allowed them to believe in his resurrection?
7. What unique role would the disciples have because they saw Jesus bodily alive after his resurrection (24:48), and what would they require in order to carry it out (24:49)?
8. Why was it important, do you think, for the disciples to witness the empty tomb, the appearances of Jesus, and his ascension to heaven (24:50-51)?
9. How was their outlook changed from what it was at the beginning of Luke 24 to what it was in 24:52-53?
10. Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-23, 35-58. What question seems to drive Paul’s discussion (15:12)? List the implications of not believing in the resurrection of the dead (15:13-19)? What fact overturns doubt that human beings can rise from the dead (15:20-23)?
11. Is there a difference between going to heaven when you die and being raised from the dead? Explain.
12. What analogies does Paul use to explain what he means by the “resurrection *body*” (15:35-41)? How are these helpful comparisons?
13. According to Paul what two kinds of bodies are applicable to human beings, and what are the main differences between them (15:42-50)?
14. When will human beings receive their new bodies, and what will be the results when they do (15:51-56)?
15. Explain the source of Paul’s thanksgiving in 15:57. How does belief in the resurrection affect the way we view our work as Christians in this world (15:58)?
16. Read 1 John 1:1-4. What themes does John mention which remind you of the other two readings? What seems to be his main focus in this passage?
17. Define these terms and discuss their connection to the resurrection of Jesus: “eternal life,” “fellowship,” and “joy.”