

1 Cor 15:34-49 - "Heavenly Bodies."
Small group notes for the facilitator only

Opening: Can you think of two specific events in your life that you would say, as a result, made your life better? N.B. You *can* say when you first believed in Jesus but don't feel you have to!!

Week three of the topic of resurrection. Firstly we asked, "what if what they say is true," about the resurrection of Christ. Next we looked at whether or not it *had* to be a physical resurrection. Having decided it was true and that it had to be physical, this week we look at what the resurrected body will be like.

Read 1 Cor 15:34-49.

Q. In verse 37 Paul compares resurrection to a seed growing into a plant. What does this metaphor mean?

A. The understanding is that a seed has to die in order to grow into something more glorious. Botanically this is incorrect, the seed doesn't die but metaphorically it has to be buried in the ground before it is 'resurrected' as something much more glorious.

Q. Paul continues the metaphor to talk about various kinds of flesh and various bodies. What do you think he means? What's the point he's trying to convey?

A. Probably simply that God gives bodies as he chooses (v38) and whatever he gives it, it will inevitably become. Think of the acorn planted in the ground, it has everything it needs to know to become a giant oak tree.

Q. When Paul talks about 'heavenly bodies', in context, what do you think he's talking about?

A. Almost certainly he's talking about planets and stars but some commentators (and Mormons) have tried to make it mean angels or cosmic realms.

Q. In verses 42-44 can you sum up what Paul's saying? Does everyone receive a heavenly body?

A. We know from the context of the chapter that "God will put all his enemies under his feet" (v25) so I suspect that Paul is talking specifically to those who have faith in the resurrected Christ (again, this is the context of the chapter). I think Paul is really describing the resurrected Christ here but he could be describing what happens to all at the second coming (c.f. v23).

Q. Paul refers to the "first Adam" and the "last Adam" as well as the "first man" and "second man." What important fact does this tell us about the relationship between Adam and Jesus?

A. That Jesus is in the line of Adam therefore Jesus is a "man of dust" like Adam was, albeit by adoption through his earthly father, Joseph (Luke 3:23). Some scholars believe that Mary was in the line of David (and therefore Adam) through David's son Nathan.

Q. Paul says, "Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven" (v49). Just like Jesus bore the image of Adam, so do we. What does this tell us about how we bear the image of the "man of heaven?"

A. This passage is about resurrection. Paul is saying that in the same way that Christ was resurrected from his Adamic body to his heavenly body, we will do likewise.

Now read Romans 8:12-23.

When we talk about adoption we talk about the child becoming just as much a part of the family as any child born of flesh and blood.

Q. Is there a contradiction between verses 15 and 23 when it comes to adoption?

A. In earthly terms, yes, but in Kingdom terms we talk about the “now but not yet.” The Kingdom is here - Jesus inaugurated the Kingdom and where his Spirit abides there his Kingdom is. However, the Kingdom is not yet fully realised. Revelation 21:3 tells us that at the eschaton (end of time) the dwelling place of God will be with man - then the Kingdom will be fully realised.

Closing: If we are adopted children of God what difference should that make to our everyday lives?