

The Future of the Human Person

1 Corinthians 15:12-28, 35-44, 58

A man once asked a church warden what he thought would happen to him when he died. "I shall immediately depart into eternal happiness," he replied, then added, "but I wish you would not talk to me about such an unpleasant subject!"

The warden's ambiguity is perfectly understandable. Everyone wants to go to heaven. Almost no one wants to die! However, unless we are present on earth when Christ comes again, death is one step toward our final existence in Christ. That final existence involves being fully human persons, equipped with a spiritual body to be with Jesus and his people in a perfect environment. That ultimate hope of our own resurrection, founded on the fact of Christ's resurrection, makes a difference in how we live our bodily life now.

1. The ancient Greeks had a low view of bodily life and regarded salvation as liberation from the body. The Bible offers a high view of the body as created by God for his glory. Which view was uppermost in your own upbringing? Explain.
2. Apparently, some Christians in Corinth had stopped believing (or had never believed) in their own future bodily resurrection. Read [1 Cor. 15:12-28](#). What does Paul say are the consequences of this belief ([1 Cor. 15:12-15](#))?
3. Paul is arguing from something accepted by the Corinthians—that Christ *was* raised from the dead. What will be the consequences if this fundamental fact is denied ([1 Cor. 15:16-19](#))?
4. In what ways does [1 Cor. 15:19](#) run counter to the contemporary Western view of Christian living?
5. Why would being a new creature in Christ *only in this life* not be enough?

6. What does the resurrection of Christ ("the firstfruits"—[1 Cor. 15:20](#)) guarantee for the rest of us?
7. The Greeks viewed death as a release for the soul. Why does Paul take a less positive view ([1 Cor. 15:21-26](#))?
8. What difference will the resurrection of Christ make to the way we approach our own inevitable death?
9. Read [1 Cor. 15:35-44](#). Paul turns now to the question of what form the future existence of believers will take. What similarities will exist between this life and the next? What differences?
10. What new ideas about heaven have you gained from this study thus far?
11. Read [1 Cor. 15:58](#). Elsewhere ([1 Cor. 6:12-20](#); [1 Cor. 15:32-34](#)) Paul insists that resurrection hope calls for the repudiation of sexual immorality and an "immediate gratification" approach to life. What final exhortation does Paul now make?
12. Taken as a whole, how does this study show that our own future resurrection brings great meaning to our life and work as Christians now?

■ *As little as babies in their mothers' bodies know about their arrival, just so little do we know about eternal life.* Martin Luther