

1 Corinthians 15:35-58

Introduction: Compare two warnings regarding a state park. How can we know if each of these is true?

1. Be careful, Godzilla is on the loose. The shaking ground, the loud roar, the gigantic monster.
2. Be careful, there are no-see-ums in there. You need data not supplied in the same way.

- I. We need to believe the truth, not only that which is obvious. 15:35-41
- II. We need to believe the truth that in resurrection we will be transformed. 15:42-49
- III. If we believe that death is defeated, we should look beyond death right now. 15:50-58

We always need to be mindful that this life is not all there is.

- I. We need to believe the truth, not only that which is obvious. 15:35-41
 - A. 15:35 Some of the Corinthians doubted Paul's teaching regarding the resurrection of the dead, Their objection is not so much that what Paul said wasn't true, but that it *couldn't be true*; it was nonsensical. Paul gives them some illustrations to help them understand a concept which to them was simply not obvious.
 - B. 15:36-38 His first illustration comes from the life cycle of plants. You start with a small, brown grain of wheat. You get the green grass that produces wheat only if you're willing to lose your original grain. Jesus used this same figure to teach about his own resurrection.

John 12:23-25 NKJV ²³*But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. ²⁴Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. ²⁵He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.*

- C. 15:39-41 Next, look at the different kinds of bodies or flesh or objects in the universe. I suppose God could have created them more similar to each other than they are, but the fact is he didn't. Therefore, we need not assume that the resurrection body is going to be very much like this one at all. There are other places in Scripture that compare our future existence to things in the physical heavenly realm.

Daniel 12:2-3 NKJV ² *And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt.*

³ *Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.*

Matt 13:40-43 NKJV ⁴⁰*Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. ⁴¹The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, ⁴²and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!*

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II. We need to believe the truth that in resurrection we will be transformed. 15:42-49

A. 15:42-44 Here we see several contrasts.

i. These words pertain to the present body we possess:

1. Corruption = decay or ruin
2. Dishonor = disgrace, reproach, shame
3. Weakness = frailty or feebleness, also referring to sickness or disease
4. Natural = literally “soulish”, but it’s hard to convey the meaning. We can best perhaps quote another verse in which Paul makes a similar contrast.

1 Cor 2:14 NKJV *But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

ii. These words pertain to the body we shall receive:

1. Incorruption = genuineness, unending existence
2. Glory = splendor, dignity, honor, praise and worship
3. Power = that is, inherent power, power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature
4. Spiritual = which stand in contrast to the natural body we have now – the one that “does not receive the things of the Spirit of God.”

2 Cor 5:1-4 NKJV ¹*For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ²For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven.*

Php 3:20-21 NKJV ²⁰*For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.*

1Jn 3:2-3 NKJV ²*Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. ³And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.*

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III. If we believe that death is defeated, we should look beyond death right now. 15:50-58

- A. This passage describes what we call the *rapture* of the church. Paul brings out that when Christ returns, some Christians will have died and others will still be alive. He is coming back unexpectedly. We read it in Matthew 24:44 and again in Luke 12:40.

Luke 12:40 NKJV *Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."*

- B. At that point some believers will still be left alive and will be snatched up and transformed without ever going through an actual physical death. The OT gives us two examples that may parallel this idea. One is Enoch:

Gen 5:24 NKJV *And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.*

- C. The other is Elijah:

2Kgs 2:11 NKJV ¹¹*Then it happened, as [Elijah and Elisha] continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.*

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Conclusions:

1. **Our present limitations are temporary.** If you ever feel just hopelessly weak, sick, feeble or corrupt, congratulations! You are seeing yourself accurately, as long as you remember that all of this applies only to this earthly body that we possess now. These conditions will not last. Our transformation is coming and that should be a great encouragement.
2. **Our present situation is temporary.** Too often we as Christians buy into a perspective that says this world is all there is. This world tells us our lives are about money or stuff or anything that makes us look good or feel good. We may know this is stupid, but we live, function, make decisions and feel from day to day as if it were true. We need to change our perspective and begin living like citizens of heaven who don't live merely for the here and now.
3. **We should prioritize in light of eternity.** If we live for the here and now we will prioritize for the here and now. What would happen if we prioritized in light of eternity? How much would money or stuff or looks or feelings matter? Answer: A lot less. What if we asked a simple question like, "How will this idea look 100 years from now when I'm in heaven?" If answering that question would make a difference in what we do, then we probably need to ask it more often. **Illustration:** Students preparing for a paper of final exam.
4. **We will never regret the outcome of such decisions.** One thing that probably keeps us living in the here and now is simple fear. It takes guts to live by faith, or better yet, it takes *faith* to live by faith. It takes a willingness to trust Jesus and believe that what he says is true.

Luke 12:32-34 NKJV ³²"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. ³⁴For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

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Finally, Paul tells us more about the rapture in 1 Thessalonians. We'll finish today with this:

First Thessalonians 4:13-18 NKJV ¹³But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. ¹⁴For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. ¹⁵For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸Therefore comfort one another with these words.