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A Critique of the Corporate Body View of the Resurrection of the Dead

I have been a believer in fulfilled prophecy for over eight years now. At the beginning of my journey, the two biggest hurdles to overcome as a partial preterist were the resurrection of the dead and the millennium. These two items are likely the two biggest items of debate within the preterist world still today. I began to study these two items deeply, and immediately after accepting the one and only second coming of Christ in AD70, I joined a private email study group composed of all the major public proponents of what is called the “Corporate Body View” (hereafter, “CBV”) of the resurrection. If you are not familiar with this view, it is essentially that the “resurrection of the dead,” specifically in texts like 1 Cor. 15, does not refer to individual dead people departing Hades, but to the corporate or collective body of saints, both alive and dead, coming out of Judaism and into the church or the “body” of Christ. I quickly adopted this view because it seemed tremendously logical and straightforward. I immersed myself into the works of Max King, who was considered to have written the definitive work explaining a corporate body view of the resurrection of the dead. I have written a few articles on the subject over the years, and spoken at three different Preterist Pilgrim Weekends on the subject of resurrection.

As I continued to study these subjects and engage other preterist Christians who had different views on the resurrection, I started seeing problems with many of the arguments made to defend a corporate body view of the resurrection of the dead. This paper seeks to analyze those problems and propose a solution.

Each titled section in this paper is a critique of the each of the most important arguments made in the CBV. At the end, I offer a possible solution that honors the corporate and covenantal aspects of the story from Genesis to Revelation, but also gives clarity to what happened (and happens today?) to the individual.

“Our Body”

It could easily be said that the most foundational argument of the CBV is that the use of the phrase “our body” (a plural possessive pronoun with a singular noun) by Paul in resurrection-related passages indicates that *only* a corporate body resurrection can be in view and that numerous individual bodies *cannot* be in view. This has been the view of every CBV speaker at all the Preterist Pilgrim Weekends on the topic of resurrection – Preston, Scott, Bell, Curtis, etc., and was specifically the argument made by King in “The Cross and the Parousia.” It is based on a basic Greek grammar rule which says that generally, pronouns and nouns should agree in number. Therefore, if the noun “body” is singular following a plural pronoun such as “our,” then the meaning is to be understood as a single corporate “body” (group, collective) to which everyone who is addressed belongs.

However, there are exceptions to this Greek rule, and context determines which way it goes. It was possible to use a plural possessive pronoun with a singular noun in order to put emphasis on the noun. This usage was not meant to communicate the existence of only one noun collectively for all those represented by the plural pronoun. I will demonstrate this by looking at some advanced Greek Grammars and citing some scriptural examples. Those examples will also be looked at via the context of surrounding passages.

In Wallace’s Grammar (pg. 399-406), he lists several categories of pronoun/noun number agreement: “collective singular subjects, compound subjects, indefinite plurals, and categorical plurals.” Both Robertson’s Grammar and Blass and Debrunner’s Grammar discuss this phenomenon, calling them

“idiomatic plurals and singulars,” and *constructio ad sensum* (“construction according to the sense”), respectively. Turner’s Grammar says that using a plural pronoun with a singular noun in order to put emphasis on the noun, but not deny the plurality of the noun, was a common Hebraism: “Contrary to normal Greek and Latin practice, the NT sometimes follows the Aramaic and Hebrew preference for a *distributive singular*. Something belonging to each person in a group is placed in the singular: as in, TO SOMA HUMON (1 Cor. 6:19) and EN TE KARDIA AUTON (Luke 1:66).”

Therefore, according to the rules of grammar, it wouldn’t be wrong to first consider the singular noun option, but the plural noun should also be considered; it could go either way based on context. The words “our (plural) body (singular)” in and of themselves do not prove a corporate body is in view.

The primary singular body CBV texts are: Romans 8:23 (NASB) “*And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body*”; and Philippians 3:21 (NASB) “*who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.*”

Romans is challenging because concepts of corporate identity exist throughout – identity based on the law, on sin, and on covenant. “Flesh” (Greek: *sarx*) is a word used by Paul, which is often argued by CBV advocates to be a mode of existence based on the Law (in fact, I wrote a paper on this very position about 7 years ago, borrowing mostly from Max King). Indeed, life under the law was a “wretched” existence according to Paul (7:24). This is a good and acceptable understanding of “flesh” here in Romans 7 & 8.

However, “the flesh” had a more protracted meaning than “covenantal mode of existence” in the ancient Greek, and in Paul’s writings. According to the highly respected scholar F.F. Bruce (*Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free, 1977*), “flesh” primarily referred to human nature, and was seen as the locus of temptation and sin; not literally in biological tissue, but more holistically in the individual as a whole person. That is, when one would say “his mind was set on the flesh” they meant he was living according to his own human nature, not brought under control by the mind of God through His Spirit (e.g. Gal. 5:16-21).

Of course, a corporate solidarity exists for those who were under the Law, for they all shared the same fate and were all under the same covenant. But the meaning of “in the flesh” should not be stretched beyond its normal use in order to exclude it – that is, it would be incorrect to define the meaning of “in the flesh” as only a covenantal “mode of existence” to the exclusion of the individual’s human nature as sinful. The human nature is general and primary; the covenantal mode of existence is specific within that general category. One text that makes this point clear is Galatians 2:18-20.

(ESV) “For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. (19) For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. (20) I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

It is clear here that being under the law is not the same as being in the flesh, since Paul said that he died to the law yet was still in the flesh. And, Gentiles who had not formerly known God or were in a covenantal mode of existence under the Law were also said to be “in the flesh” (see Gal. 4:8-9 with 5:13ff). So it might be better stated that being “in the flesh” in the above texts is not specifically talking about biological tissue, and while a having covenantal background are most certainly and primarily talking about being “human.”

What is problematic to the single-body view of Romans 8:23 is the plurality of individuals discussed throughout that chapter. For example:

(8:11) (NASB) “...will also give life to your mortal bodies”

Verse 11 is a tricky verse for the CBV advocates. Over my years of study with them on this, no solid contextual answer has ever been given without resorting to a lot of imposing of foreign concepts into the text. Next we will look at verse 13:

(8:13) (NASB) “for if you [plural] are living according to the flesh, you [plural] must die; but if by the Spirit you [plural] are putting to death the deeds of the body, you [plural] will live.”

Contextually it cannot be the deeds of a corporate body (such as of Moses, Adam or Christ) being put to death, but rather must be the individual deeds of each person because of what is said in the next verse:

(8:14) NASB “For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.”

Paul’s point was that there were individual members of the body of Christ who were not putting to death the sinful deeds of their own individual selves, with the result that some would live (spiritually) and some would die (spiritually). This is seen clearly by Paul’s use of “so then” (Greek: *ara*) in 8:12, which is a particle denoting inference, the drawing of a decisive conclusion regarding the “mortal bodies”:

(8:12) NASB “So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.”

Since each individual Roman believers had been set free from the law of sin and death, they each one then must not live according to the sinful human nature aroused by the law. Why? Because (a) the Spirit was within each of them, and (b) they were about to suffer with Christ through the great persecution, which would (c) result in each one who overcomes being glorified with Christ:

(8:16-17) NASB “The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, (17) and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.”

The CBV also misses or de-emphasizes the theme of martyrdom in this chapter. The second half of Romans 8 (vs. 18-39) is built around a promise to people (in Rome) about to be martyred under the persecution of Nero, and is meant to teach them that when they are martyred they will be glorified like Christ was after his martyrdom. This Neronian persecution, which followed the Jewish persecution they were then receiving, was the “suffering” and “pains of childbirth” in Rom. 8:18 & 22 (cf. Matt. 24:7-9):

Romans 8:18, 22 NASB “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us... (22) For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.”

So when we get to the phrase “redemption of our body” (8:23), a singular noun with a plural pronoun, it does not prove that ONLY one body (i.e. a corporate body) would be raised. Individual “bodies” is what Paul meant in this chapter when he used the word “soma,” based on its use in verse 11 (“your mortal bodies”). Paul would be using the idiomatic plural here, a Hebrew construction, or *constructio ad sensum* (construction according to the sense).

In addition to all the plural nouns applicable to each Roman Christian in this chapter (“sons,” “heirs,” “hearts,” “saints”), we can see here that the promise was that the Spirit would help each individual person in their weakness, searching each person’s heart:

(8:26-27) NASB *“In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; (27) and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”*

This was not a promise to the weakness of a corporate body (notice “our weakness” is a plural pronoun with a singular noun); that would be incredibly impotent and impersonal with the upcoming tribulation. Rather, it was to the “hearts” of the “saints.”

This is further confirmed towards the end, once the entire chapter is read as a whole in its context of persecution and distress:

(8:35-36) NASB *“Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (36) Just as it is written, ‘FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED.’”* [emphasis NASB]

The second primary text for a singular corporate body resurrection is Phil. 3:21. Max King (The Cross & the Parousia, pg. 565-573) identified Phil. 3:21 as a clear text that showed that “body” meant a corporate group, not the individual person:

Philippians 3:20-21 ESV *“(20) But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, (21) who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.”*

There are several problems with a corporate body view here. I will engage these problems in three major points.

First, what is the lowly body? The phrase “lowly body” (ESV), “vile body” (KJV), “body of our humble state” (NASB) in Greek is *soma tes tapeinoseos*, which literally is “body of our humiliation.” It is usually claimed in the CBV that the “lowly body” is the corporate body of Israel to which the Apostle and other Jews were still in the process of dying (TC&TP, pg. 572). This is argued primarily because Paul discussed the Judaizing “dogs” earlier in Phil. 3, and expressed his historic solidarity with Israel and his movement out of the Law of Moses. King argues:

*“Since the law set forth a mode of somatic existence wherein sin and death were able to reign, it follows that victory through Christ is by means of a new mode of existence wherein life and righteousness reign. We conclude, therefore, that (1) somatic change is determined by a change in one’s mode of existence, (2) this is accomplished through a change from the Old to the New covenant, (3) covenantal change was the specific design of Christ’s pre-end-of-the-age reign, and (4) from that viewpoint, Paul ties somatic change in v. 21 to the **working** of Christ.”* [Emphasis King’s] (pg. 573)

While I disagree with King’s interpretation of this text as applied to the “body,” I am not denying the overlapping of covenants during this transition period nor Paul’s past as a Jew under the Law. The problem for King is there are no actual written statements by NT authors or direct, concrete evidence that covenantal change = somatic change. This is a theory, strung together on facts assumed to connect to each other, much like how reformed theories of atonement are strung together. This will become clearer as we continue.

A basic rule of preterist interpretation is to pay attention to the pronouns and see who is being addressed. The pronoun “our” in Phil. 3:20 contextually can only be Paul’s entire audience in Philippi (at least, all those who are “perfect”):

Philippians 3:15 NASB *“Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you;”*

The church in Philippi was likely composed of Jews (cf. Acts 16:12ff; Lydia likely being a Jewish proselyte), but also of Greeks who never would have been in the corporate body of Israel. The text doesn’t indicate two lowly corporate bodies (one for Jews and the other for Gentiles), so the context of “our” being all of Paul’s audience in Philippi precludes the typical corporate body view of dying to old covenant Israel, since the Greeks were never in the old covenant body of Moses (and I will demonstrate later that Gentile converts to Christ did not enter into the old covenant body of Moses). It would have to be some other “covenantal body” which included both Jews and Greeks that Paul had in mind if he was indeed referring to a corporate body.

Some CBV advocates say the “body of humiliation” is not the old covenant body of Moses as King specified, but rather is the body of Christ, the church, which did contain both Jews and Gentiles. If the “lowly body” was the church/the body of Christ, then it seems to contradict other more specific passages about the church being “pure, spotless, undefiled, a bride,” etc.

2 Corinthians 11:2 ESV *“For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.”*

Ephesians 5:25-27 ESV *“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, (26) that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, (27) so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.”*

1 Peter 2:4, 5, 7a, 9 ESV *“As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, (5) you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ... (7) So the honor is for you who believe ... (9) But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”*

Do any of these passages sound like the body of Christ is “lowly” or of “humble state”? While possible, it doesn’t seem intuitively likely.

Leaving the discussion on the “lowly body” for a brief moment, I’d like to look at the context of the entire epistle, which I believe shows that the best meaning of “lowly body” is the individual person. Every other instance of this word “lowly” (Greek: *tapeinosei*) – three other times in the NT – refer to specific individuals found in a state of humiliation (see Luke 1:48; Acts 8:33; James 1:10).

Here in Phil. 3:21, the form of this word is a noun. The verb form of this word, *etapeinosen*, is used of Jesus just one chapter earlier in Phil 2:8 (ESV):

“(6) who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, (7) but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. (8) And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

Notice that the verb points to Jesus' humble state as a "human." This fits with every other NT use of this word. The most logical way to determine this word's meaning is to see how Paul used it elsewhere in the same letter. As we have already seen, he used it in reference to Jesus' "human form," which leads to the simple conclusion that Paul was referring to the individual human, not the church, when he used the phrase "lowly body."

Second, notice in the preceding verse (3:20) the location of both the citizenship and the Savior: "heaven." The most straightforward contextual explanation is that the individual bodies of the saints in Philippi would be transformed into the same type of heavenly body as Jesus possessed in heaven. In refutation of this, CBV advocates usually point out the corporate solidarity Paul had as a Jew with the Law and the body of Moses from previous verses in chapter 3. While Paul certainly identified as belonging to that community, he also thoroughly repudiated it (3:7-8). Paul then made a personal plea for his own individual resurrection: "that by any means possible **I** may attain the resurrection from the dead" (3:11). One's covenantal status surely dictated the end result in the resurrection, but this does not negate the individual tone clearly present in this text.

At this point, CBV advocates usually counter-argue (as I have done in the past) that the fact that Paul would say he hoped "by any means possible" to "attain the resurrection," followed by "not that I've already obtained it," would be an odd thing to say if he is talking about a corpse resurrection, or even an invisible individual bodily resurrection out of Hades, since it would be obvious that he hadn't obtained it yet because he was still living! And, if it was the general resurrection of the dead, doesn't everyone (both the just and the unjust) participate in it to be judged? If so, why would Paul "hope" to be part of something that he had no choice over?

While I am certainly not arguing for a corpse resurrection, I do believe that Paul used rhetoric designed to demonstrate that even in his imprisonment, he felt he hadn't yet "completed the race" of his apostolic ministry as it were. This seems to reflect some sort of maturity benchmark. Notice 2 Timothy, which would be during Paul's last imprisonment before his death:

2 Timothy 2:3-10 ESV "Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. (4) No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. (5) An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. (6) It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. (7) Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. (8) Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, (9) for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound! (10) Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."

Though the Greek word here for "may obtain" is not exactly the same as "may attain" in Phil. 3:11-12, it is very similar in meaning and communicates the same idea. This passage clearly describes striving for maturity and holiness as striving for salvation and the attainment of glory, just as Paul did in Phil. 3. "Striving" is very uncomfortable for evangelicals based on our "grace vs. works" mentality. But we know from what we read above that Paul clearly saw the need to continue to strive for holiness and perfection "in order to attain" both resurrection and salvation.

1 John 3 also emphasizes purity in connection with seeing Christ, which I believe is connected with the idea of seeing God "face to face" (or "eye to eye").

1 John 3:2-3 ESV *“Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. (3) And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.”*

Notice the emphasis on purifying oneself. This connects with the striving theme above. I might also note here that this passage seems to strongly indicate a transformation of each/all of the children into being like Christ at his parousia, rather than a legal transformation of a corporate body. This seems intuitively clear by how John said he and they didn’t know what they would be like when Jesus returned. If this was talking about covenant transition, this would be a ridiculous thing to say since they were preaching exactly what a new covenant without an old covenant would look like.

One of the most important examples of striving till the end might be Revelation 3. In the seven letters, some are told that if they endure to the end (i.e. if they die as martyrs in the persecution), they will be saved. But some, because of their spiritual maturity, will get to skip the whole tribulation:

Rev. 3:10-11 ESV *“Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. (11) I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.”*

The implications of this are interesting and are more than we can discuss here. The point remains that it is not outside the scope of Paul’s teaching for him to write “not that I have attained it” in order to emphasize continued need to work and strive for holiness.

Third, it’s not just in Phil. 3:21 where Paul employs a plural possessive pronoun with a singular noun (“our body”). The two preceding verses (3:19-20) have four occurrences: “*whose end* is destruction,” “*whose god* is their appetite,” “*whose glory* is their shame,” and “*our citizenship* is in heaven.” Each of the Christ-deniers had their own destruction, their own appetite, and their own shame. Each citizen of heaven had their own citizenship. One might argue that there was a corporate solidarity in each of the two groups, and that is certainly true, but we can know for certain that the singular nouns were distributive because of how Paul employed a plural noun with a plural pronoun in the same sentence construction: “who set *their minds* on earthly things.” Paul had no problem switching between singular and plural nouns with plural pronouns.

A rather clear example of how Paul employed the plural possessive pronoun with a singular noun to give emphasis to the noun, yet acknowledge the obvious plurality of the noun, is 1 Thess. 5:23.

(ESV) *“Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Notice how “your” is plural, but the nouns “spirit,” “soul,” and “body” are singular. Paul didn’t mean the corporate spirit, soul and body of the Thessalonian church, he meant the individual spirits, souls and bodies of the Thessalonian saints might be kept until the Parousia. CBV advocates use this text in this way to prove imminence and audience relevance, and they are right to do so. Yet, Paul uses “your (plural) body (singular)” here in Thessalonians, which is the same grammatical construct as “our body” in the two disputed texts.

Other examples of the plural possessive pronoun with a singular noun, but meaning a plurality of the noun distributed to each individual, are:

Luke 6:22 ESV *“Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man!”*

Romans 8:16 ESV *“The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,”*

Romans 8:26 ESV “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.”

2 Corinthians 1:12 NASB “For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you.”

2 Corinthians 6:11 NASB “Our mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide.”

1 Thessalonians 2:17 NASB “But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while--in person, not in spirit--were all the more eager with great desire to see your face.”

James 3:3 NASB “Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well.”

Revelation 13:16 NASB “And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead”

The James 3:3 passage is very important, because here we clearly see the singular “body” meaning multiple horses’ bodies.

After looking at all the evidence regarding plural possessive pronouns with singular nouns, it is clear that the CBV claim that the phrase “our body” **must** be a corporate body is not only contrary to the rules of Greek grammar, but also is contrary to the context of the passages in view.

“Are Being Raised”

A major pillar of the CBV is Paul’s use of the present passive indicative (“PPI”) verb form in 1 Corinthians 15. For example, the numerously used phrase in the text, “are raised,” is argued to technically be, “are being raised.” This is meant to show that there was a dying/rising process underway when Paul wrote. If people were in the process of dying and rising in AD57 when 1 Corinthians was written, then this must prove that the resurrection of the body must be the corporate body of Christ referred to earlier in 1 Cor. 12, so the argument goes. Specifically, this dying and rising process was integrally tied to the changing of the covenants – dying to the law and rising to Christ in the process of redemption and salvation.

Jack Scott taught this view at the 2009 PPW (I was present), Sam Frost wrote about it in his book “Exegetical Essays on the Resurrection,” and William Bell wrote an article on it in Fulfilled! Magazine in 2013. None of them, however, except Scott, cite any Greek authorities, who cited from Machen’s “New Testament Greek for Beginners.” Machen said that translating the present passive indicative verb as an ongoing action can communicate better in English, but he also gives caution about doing so.

More advanced Greek studies indicate that the PPI need not always be translated as ongoing, and many times are not unless the context clearly indicates the need for such. A PPI can be an event in the past, an

event in the present, an ongoing event in the present, or an event in the future. Greek is complex like that. Context determines.

Wallace notes several nuances of the present tense: The progressive present, where the action is an ongoing process; the iterative present, where an action repeatedly happens; the gnomic present, where the statement indicates a timeless fact; the futuristic present, where the action is an event in the future. There is also the aorist present, the historical present, and the periphrastic present.

One such example (among many) is 1 Corinthians 3:11 NASB *“For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”* “Is laid” is a present passive indicative verb, but it would be wrong to translate it “is being laid,” since that foundation was already laid; what was ongoing was the building upon the foundation (see 3:10). This is an example of a gnomic present. Another example is 1 Corinthians 12:8 NASB *“For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit.”* Just as in the previous use in 1 Corinthians, the PPI here is not an ongoing process for the individual, but a specific event in the past. The Spirit had already poured out these gifts to the Corinthians, who were employing them in incorrect ways.

In 1 Cor. 15, every time Paul refers to the resurrection of the dead he uses the present passive form, except for one instance at the end, 15:52, where he uses the future passive indicative: “the dead will be raised.” Since according to Wallace the future tense does not admit any present progressive aspect, and since there is no reason to think that Paul was discussing two different resurrections of the dead in this chapter, it seems contradictory for him to imply a progressive aspect in previous instances then deny it in vs. 52. If Paul wanted to indicate a progressive aspect of the resurrection, he would have used a periphrastic future in vs 52 to express this idea (see Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, pg. 648).

My point in raising this is not to say that “are raised” cannot be an ongoing action, but that it incorrect to say it *must* be ongoing simply because it is a present passive indicative. Again, the context of the chapter will determine how to understand what would be raised at the Parousia.

The Prophetic Background

Hosea and the prophets are used in the CBV to demonstrate the covenant change which was underway in the first century. This then is used to prove that the “body” in 1 Cor. 15 is the corporate body of Israel (from Hosea) being raised into the corporate body of Christ. This is a very strong and powerful argument.

Without denying the covenantal death that Israel as a nation was in because of their sin (Hos. 6:1-3; 8:1, 8; 13:1, 12-13), there is also an individual aspect in the passage quoted by Paul in 1 Cor. 15:55. Hosea moves from the corporate identity of “Ephraim” in 13:12 to a plurality of persons in Sheol (Hades):

Hosea 13:14 ESV *“Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from Death? O Death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion is hidden from my eyes.”*

“Sheol” was the location of the dead in Hebrew thought. Some CBV advocates deny this, claiming Sheol is symbolic for the grave, which is symbolic of covenant death (cut off from the presence of God as a nation). While I agree with the connection to covenant death, a word study of Sheol in the entire OT shows that this word does not fit for grave in most of its uses (see Morey, *Death and the Afterlife*, pg. 72-93). Sheol as the underworld location of the dead was common in ANE thought and was used throughout the Second Temple literature. One can correctly argue that the word pictures were highly metaphoric and

apocalyptically styled (i.e. not to be taken as a literal description), but there is no evidence that Second Temple writers or their audience understood “Sheol” as only a metaphor for covenant death and nothing else. Furthermore, not once did Jesus or any apostle redefine Sheol as a word which held no meaning other than as a metaphor for “covenant death.” Likely the most important NT demonstrating this is Acts 2:31-32, where Peter speaks of Jesus having neither having his flesh see decay in the tomb nor his person being abandoned in the realm of Hades (as most of his contemporaries would have believed).

Paul also referenced Isaiah 25:8 in 1 Cor. 15:54. Covenant judgment in Isaiah 24-27 is absolutely at the forefront. However, it’s not a corporate “body” that is found in this text, but many individual “bodies:”

Isaiah 26:19 (ESV) *“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 [plural].”*

In fact, there’s not one location in the entire OT where the word “body” is used in a corporate manner, specifically in regard to resurrection language. The only time “body” is used, it is in the plural (Isa. 26:19). The whole “house” of Israel will be raised (Ezek. 37:11), but even here there are plural “graves” (37:12-13) for the “people.” I’m not arguing a literal grave resurrection in Ezekiel; that is not the meaning of this text. My point is that “body” is not used as a singular noun to represent a corporate body in the prophets; when the prophets spoke of resurrection, they say a national/corporate identity resurrection, and a personal individual resurrection out of the realm of the dead.

“Body” in 1 Corinthians

Another argument sometimes made by CBV advocates is how Paul used “body” in a corporate manner throughout 1 Corinthians, so when he gets to chapter 15 he is just continuing that same meaning. It goes without saying that there is not one scholar or expositor who agrees with this, so the burden of proof is on the one making this claim. Nevertheless, I will deconstruct this argument by looking at all the 1 Corinthians passages that have the word “body” in them:

1 Corinthians 5:3 NASB *“For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present.”*

This is Paul’s personal body.

1 Corinthians 6:13-20 NASB *“Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. (14) Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power. (15) Do you not know that your bodies [plural pronoun with a plural noun-jk] are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be! (17) But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him. (18) Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. (19) Or do you not know that your body [plural pronoun with a singular noun-jk] is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? (20) For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body [plural pronoun with a singular noun-jk].*

Here, Paul is addressing individuals in the church and teaching them what they do with their bodies is critically important. Notice that Paul employs both the plural noun “bodies” (vs. 15) and the singular noun “body” (vss. 18, 19). This does not mean that Paul switched

from the individual to the corporate. When one understands the rules of grammar (discussed above), then it's obvious that a singular "body" can also mean plural "bodies." The words "a man" and "his own body" specifically mean that Paul was addressing the sexual use of each individual person's body. A common reply by CBV advocates is that the individual is part of the corporate and what they do with their personal body impacts the corporate body. Well, of course it does. No one is denying that. But, that does not prove a corporate meaning of the word "body" here in chapter 6.

1 Corinthians 7:4 NASB *"The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does."*

1 Corinthians 7:34 NASB *"and his interests are divided. The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband."*

1 Corinthians 9:27 NASB *"but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified."*

These last three are all the individual human body.

1 Corinthians 10:16 NASB *"Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?"*

Because of the reference to the blood of Christ, this likely refers to the actual body of Christ, connected back to the cross. The cup and the bread were representative of the biological body and blood of Christ that hung on the cross. It could be a reference to the church body, but the "blood of Christ" is not a corporate church reference, so the grammar strongly suggests it is Jesus' actual human body on the cross.

1 Corinthians 10:17 NASB *"Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread."*

Now Paul introduces the church as the body of Christ for the first time in the letter.

1 Corinthians 11:24, 27, 29 NASB *"and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' (27) Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. (29) For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly."*

Back to the actual body of Christ (some see "the body" of vs 29 as the church body, but the antecedent referent to "body" belongs to Christ's own personal body.

1 Corinthians 12:12 NASB *"For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ."*

There are 18 uses of the word "body" in chapter 12. I will not list them all. We will just look at this first one, and admit that all those that follow continue the same thought. This text is referring to the church as a corporate body.

It's important to note here that the first two uses of "the body" in vs. 12 refers to the individual human body as a reference in this teaching. This is connected to the previous

verse: (11) NASB “*But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.*”

Throughout this chapter, Paul uses parts of the individual human body for illustration of the church as the body of Christ. The human body was of such common thought in Greek culture that it was a logical starting point for teaching about how they needed to get along as a church with all their different spiritual gifts.

1 Corinthians 13:3 NASB “*And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.*”

This is Paul’s human body, again.

1 Corinthians 15:35 NASB “*But someone will say, ‘How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?’*”

Obviously we can see that Paul did not consistently apply a corporate meaning to the word “body” in 1 Corinthians. In fact, he overwhelmingly uses the individual human body, and uses the corporate meaning for the first time in chapter 10. The problem of claiming that chapter 15’s use of “body” follows Paul’s “corporate body” flow of thought is further undermined by the fact that Paul returns to the common usage of “body” in chapter 13 as the human body. The continuity argument favors the individual view, not the corporate. Chapter 12 is not defining the word “body,” which was already used 16 time prior to ch. 12 with the already understood meaning of the human body.

Yet even in chapter 12 the teaching is not really about defining what a “corporate body” is, but rather is on correcting certain people’s behavior in the assembly with their individual spiritual gifts, using the human body as a teaching tool for church behavior (“the ear should not say to the eye,” etc.)

Contrary to what is claimed, the evidence shows that a “corporate body” is not the theme of “body” in the entire letter. In fact, it is barely a theme at all except as a pericope in chapter 12 for the proper use of gifts in the assembly.

2 Corinthians 3-5 and Covenant Transition

It is claimed by CBV adherents that covenant transition is the primary topic under consideration in 2 Cor. 3-5. Specifically, it is posited that since covenant transition is directly mentioned in chapter 3, that aspect defines what Paul meant in chapters 4 and 5 regarding “the body.” It is true that covenant transition is directly referred to in chapter 3; however, it is wrong to apply this to every aspect of what Paul said in this section of text, as we will see next.

The letters of 1 & 2 Corinthians have been widely noted and accepted as demonstrating Paul’s command in writing in Greek rhetoric (Witherington III, *Conflict and Community*). This knowledge is well known today by scholars who have studied contemporary Greek writings and compared them to Paul’s letters. 1 & 2 Corinthians are very Greek letters written to a very Hellenistic audience or ones well versed in Greek rhetoric, who could respond to Paul’s ethos and pathos evident throughout the letters. After 2 Corinthians begins with a thanksgiving and an *exordium* (an exordium is the beginning part aimed at making the audience open to what follows) in 1:3-7, Paul moves into the *narratio* in 1:8—2:16. The *narratio* is where the rhetor states the facts of the case that were at issue or the main questions under debate. According to Witherington,

“Paul...chooses to build up goodwill and compassion in the *narratio* by dealing with less crucial charges such as possible dishonesty about his travel plans, his sternness in the painful letter toward the one who had offended him, and his supposed lack of love and concern for the Corinthians. These are important issues and Paul will return to them later in the “argument” section of the discourse, but it is clear from 2:17 and what follows in 3:1—6:13 that the major issue is the legitimacy of Paul’s ministry. It is **above all else** that this is in question in Corinth and therefore also this letter.” (Emphasis mine)

Chapter 2 verse 17 is the *propositio*. In forensic rhetoric, the *propositio* is the statement to be proved true or false by the arguments that follow. Paul wrote, “*For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.*” Here, Paul denies the charge of being a false ambassador of Christ and the most critical part of that charge, that he has been untrustworthy of the Corinthian’s money.

Again quoting Witherington,

“Paul’s basic rhetorical strategy seems to be that at the beginning of the *probatio* (3:1—6:13) [the *probatio* brings in arguments to support the debater’s case-JK] he will compare his ministry with that of Moses and on that basis develop arguments to show why he should be seen as a true minister of the gospel or ambassador of Christ and thus should be reconciled to and recognized by his Corinthian converts.”

Baird is right when he says,

“[The] central concern of 2 Corinthians ... is the discussion of apostolic authority, and it is in this light that 2 Cor 3:1-3 must be viewed. When this is done, it will be evident that Paul’s [main] concern in this context is not with a covenant written on the hearts of his parishioners, but with his own experience of commission in that covenant’s ministry.” (“Letters of Recommendation,” pg. 172)

This all makes great sense, especially as we move into chapters 4 and 5 which is where the CBV starts to fall apart. In 4:7-9, Paul gives a catalog of trials that he has endured, consisting of eight present tense middle or passive voice participles in four contrasting pairs linked by *all’ ouk* (“but not”). Again quoting Witherington,

“It is in set pieces like this that we see Paul’s rhetorical skills most clearly. For example, the second pair “perplexed but not totally perplexed” contains a pun of both sound and content. One could be distressed without being totally desperate. He has been hard pressed but not at his wit’s end; at a loss but not completely lost; persecuted, abandoned, and knocked down, but not knocked out. Taken as a whole, this catalog suggests that Paul’s vessel has plenty of cracks but is still intact, which suggests miraculous preservation.”

Then in the very next verse (4:10), William Bell and other CBV advocates claim that “*always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body*” refers to the corporate body, not the bodies of Paul or the other apostles. Which corporate body that is, the Church or dead Israel, he has struggled to state clearly as seen in at least two different Preterist Pilgrim Weekend discussions (2008 and 2014) on the topic.

Notice the surrounding context:

2 Corinthians 4:7-12 NASB *“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; (8) we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; (9) persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; (10) always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. (11) For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. (12) So death works in us, but life in you.”*

CBV adherents claim that Paul and the other apostles were in the dying corporate body of Israel, while the Corinthians (composed of both Jews and Greeks) were in the living body of Christ. This argument is made on two main points: that chapter 3 introduces a covenant transition theme, and that Paul used the singular form of “body.”

The covenant transition aspect of Ch. 3 was noted above, and is not denied. However, covenant transition does not demand a corporate understanding of “body,” particularly when seen within the entire construct of Paul’s rhetorical argument. And, we have already seen how the construct “our body” (plural possessive pronoun with a singular noun) does not demand in Greek that a singular body is in view.

Look at chapter 4 verse 10, and ask yourself: if the corporate body view is correct, then how many different corporate bodies are in this text? (Go ahead and pause and reread that verse.)

Notice how both the dying of Jesus and the life of Jesus was on display in the “body” (singular noun with a plural pronoun) of the apostles. Is this the individual bodies of the apostles, or the corporate body to which they belonged?

Bell argues the latter (he must, for if he doesn’t then he gives up the farm). But, to which corporate body did the apostles belong? Did they belong to two corporate bodies at the same time, or to just one corporate body that was both dying and rising at the same time? Was the dying of Jesus in the “body of Israel” but the life of Jesus in the “body of the church”? Or are they both in the “body of Israel?” They can’t be both be in the “body of the church” since that creates a problem for what body the Corinthians are in (“death works in us [apostles] but life works in you [Corinthians]”).

The fact that this gets convoluted, and CBV adherents have had a tough time making sense of this passage, indicates to me that violence is being done to the text. This is a clear case of trying to force a square peg into a round hole because of a preconceived notion that every use of “body” must be corporate.

When one approaches the text without preconceived notions or trying to force in a view that admittedly is difficult, it becomes easy to see that Paul’s point was that the life of martyrdom (which Christ exhibited in his life) was on display in the apostles (and especially in Paul’s!), but the resurrected life of Christ was also at work in their lives so that this life could also be at work in the Corinthians. Paul was personally and physically persecuted, and was carrying around in his own body the marks of such persecution.

In refutation of an individual body view of this text, CBV adherents says there cannot be an actual “outer man” and “inner man” for each individual in 4:16, because this is Platonism and would be far from the Hebraic view of man. I’ll have more to say about this later, but for now will make a brief comment.

CBV advocates are correct that many modern and post-modern commentators do indeed take the position that this is talking about the human body (the “outer”) in contrast to the soul (the “inner”). But the text, while sounding Platonic, is actually in my studied opinion closer to Stoicism than it is Platonism or Neo-Platonism.

First, the most up to date scholarship shows that Platonism was not in vogue in the first century (see A.A. Long, “Hellenistic Philosophy”; M.V. Lee, “Paul, the Stoics, and the Body of Christ”; and Rasmus, Engberg-Pederson, and Dunderberg, “Stoicism in Early Christianity”). Second, while Platonists did see the body as a shell with a trapped soul inside (they strongly contrasted the material with the immaterial), the Stoics did not see the body as a shell or that the soul was trapped inside it. Stoicism, according to the scholars above, was the dominant Greek worldview of the first century. For Stoics, “body” represented whole of the person, unified by one common thing: *pneuma* (Greek for “spirit”). They believed that there was a visible body on earth made of the elements and *pneuma*, and that after someone died all that remained was their *pneuma* (spirit). In this understanding, most in Paul’s Corinthian audience would have quickly seen this as meaning that the biological bodies of the apostles were under extreme duress, but their *pneuma* (spirit) was being renewed by the Holy Spirit day by day (4:13-14). This renewal of their spirit is in fact a precursor for Paul’s “new creation” in 5:17.

Notice that the “afflictions” (4:17) which Paul and the other evangelists were receiving were not merely some kind of “covenantal afflictions” – they certainly were afflicted because of their covenant status with Christ – but these were real afflictions received on the human body (“manifested in our mortal flesh”). See Acts 14:9f and 16:22f for two examples of afflictions Paul received prior to writing 1 and 2 Corinthians.

It is on the heels of this section on the physical abuses of Paul’s body that Chapter 5 presents a solution to the problem.

This chapter is argued quite diligently by CBV advocates that this is only a covenant status change for the body of Israel into the body of Christ. Word comparisons of “tent,” “building,” “house,” “not made with hands,” “naked,” “clothing,” “dwelling,” are made to show how the words applied to both the old covenant nation of Israel and their tabernacle/temple arrangement and to the new covenant church. Clearly those words were used that way (e.g., Eph. 2:14-22; 1 Peter 2:5). That those words are used elsewhere pertaining to the new covenant body of Christ is not denied. But, does that usage require its meaning here? I argue that it does not.

First, let’s look at 2 Corinthians 5:1-4 in Young’s Literal Translation:

“For we have known that if our earthly house of the tabernacle may be thrown down, a building from God we have, an house not made with hands--age-during--in the heavens, (2) for also in this we groan, with our dwelling that is from heaven earnestly desiring to clothe ourselves, (3) if so be that, having clothed ourselves, we shall not be found naked, (4) for we also who are in the tabernacle do groan, being burdened, seeing we wish not to unclothe ourselves, but to clothe ourselves, that the mortal may be swallowed up of the life.”

Notice how vs 1 starts: “For.” That’s a conjunction that bridges the thought from the previous verses, which was regarding the physical persecutions and death the apostles and evangelists were undergoing.

Next, let’s look at 2 Peter 1:13-14 again in Young’s Literal:

“and I think right, so long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up in reminding you, (14) having known that soon is the laying aside of my tabernacle, even as also our Lord Jesus Christ did shew to me,”

Peter used the same noun, *skenoo*, in the specific context of his impending death as did Paul in referencing the earthly house that he and the other apostles undergoing afflictions would put off. In 2 Peter the actual Greek word is *skenomati*, a dative singular noun used because of the reference to time (“soon”), and in 2

Cor. 5 it is *skenous*, a genitive singular noun used to emphasize something everyone in his audience possesses.

Let's continue with 2 Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 5:6-10 NASB (6) *“Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord-- (7) for we walk by faith, not by sight-- (8) we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. (9) Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. (10) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”*

Notice in 5:10 that each person (“each one,” “he”) is recompensed for what each has done “in the body.” This is referring to each person’s body. This individual aspect to judgment and recompense for what is done in the body is important to Paul’s point about how the apostles were being persecuted for the sakes of both Christ and the Corinthians. And as we already noticed, judgment and recompense for each individual was part of Paul’s admonition in 1 Cor. 6:18 (“the sexually immoral man sins against his own body”).

But maybe the biggest problem in the CBV interpretation of this text is the logical conundrum created if the “body” is the corporate body of Israel/Moses. Paul preached that being in Christ, one had died to the Law or the old “body.”

Romans 7:4-6 (ESV) *“Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. (5) For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. (6) But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.”*

It is clear from this text that it would be impossible for Paul to be “at home” in the body of Moses since he had already died to it.

Some CBV advocates might argue that as an apostle, as one still ministering to Israel (e.g. 1 Cor. 9:20), Paul was still tied to “the body of Moses,” because the old covenant had not fully disappeared (Heb. 8:13) and was still in transition (2 Cor. 3:18). Those things would be true, but they do not prove that the “body” and the “home” Paul had in mind was the old covenant body of Moses. Paul already was released from the old covenant by the power of Christ’s resurrection, as we just saw here in Rom. 7 and also in Phil. 3:8-10.

Earlier in 2 Cor. 5, Paul mentioned the words “torn down,” “groan,” “longing.” The context, as we’ve already seen, is on the physical abuses and persecution he was undergoing. It makes much more logical sense to see Paul longing to be done with his physical sufferings and to be with Christ, than it does to see Paul groaning to be out of the old covenant, since that fate was already sealed in Paul’s past. We also should connect Paul’s “groaning” here with Romans 8 –

Romans 8:18 NASB *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is [about] to be revealed to us.”*

Romans 8:23 NASB *“And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.”*

Paul's Greek audience in Corinth would immediately understand his phrases "not being found naked," and "not be unclothed but further clothed" to mean that he would rather live up to the time of the resurrection instead of being found in the intermediate state that one would be in Hades if he died before it; yet he also longs to be done with these persecutions immediately and be resting with the Lord.

That being true, Paul sums up by saying that whichever way it works out, he will stay courageous, knowing that he and everyone else must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. This point about the judgment seat is important, because elsewhere (Dan. 7:9-10, Rev. 20:11-12) we see that this judgment takes place in heaven (not on earth). This Second Temple Apocalyptic theme of a heavenly judgment makes the view that this is merely (only) about the legal transition of covenants extremely tenuous.

"The Hope of Israel"

Another CBV argument is that Paul preached the hope of Israel, which was "nothing other than the Law and the Prophets" (Acts 23:6; 24:14-15; 26:6-8, 22-23). This is absolutely true. But does this mean that the only resurrection predicted in the Law and the Prophets was a corporate resurrection? Was this the only hope of Israel? No, this was not the only resurrection in the Law and Prophets, and it was not the only hope of Israel.

In the Acts passages listed above, "the dead ones" that Paul mentioned were actual already dead people in Hades. In 23:6, he cries out "I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!" as a tactic in his defense to set the Sadducees against the Pharisees. To what degree Paul agreed with the Pharisees about the resurrection is not said, only that he believed and hoped there would be one. (The identity of "the dead" as dead people in Hades rather than spiritual dead Israelites under the Old Covenant will be proved later; for now it is sufficient to show that the understanding of the Pharisees that Paul appealed to was to biologically dead people, whether Paul agreed with them or not.)

The "resurrection of the righteous and the wicked" in Acts 24:15 echoes back to Daniel 12:2, where resurrection was not described as a "corporate body" but as "many" dead people including the individual Daniel himself. Daniel hoped that he himself would be raised unto his inheritance at the end of the age (Dan. 12:13).

When Jesus discussed the resurrection of the dead with the Pharisees in Matt. 22:23-33, he said: "*And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: (32) 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not God of the dead, but of the living.*" (ESV) Jesus individually mentioned these three dead OT saints as ones who would participate in "the resurrection of the dead."

Martha clearly had a hope in an individual resurrection of the dead on the "last day," and Jesus himself confirmed it without correction:

John 11:23-26 (ESV) "*Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.'* (24) *Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.'* (25) *Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, (26) and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?'"*

Notice the singular pronoun, "he" in the phrase "though he die," referring to both Lazarus and also any other individual from then until the end-of-the-age-Resurrection who would believe in Jesus but biologically die before the resurrection occurred. Indeed, this is a critically important passage for supporting

the grass-roots importance of individual resurrection for new covenant theology: even Jesus weeps over the individual! Though most all Jews were desirous of the reestablishment of the nation of Israel under the Messiah, the deepest concern of Jewish believers was not “will all Israel be raised,” but “will he/she/I be raised.” (For more on the Hope of Israel, please see my lecture “Exploring the Hope of Israel” from the 2014 Preterist Pilgrim Weekend conference, available from Don Preston.)

One of the problems with the CBV is that, whether intended or not, it sees the restoration of Israel into a new covenant people as an end unto itself. Often times this results in some believing that redemption in this life alone is the full expression of the prophets, with nothing specific about the afterlife of anyone other than a couple of inferences here and there. We are supposed to derive the “implications” of an afterlife from this covenant standing, but no one can say to any degree what that is. This is surprising, given how in the first century, the vast majority of all Jewish and Greek writings were fixated on what would become of life after death. For those in the CBV who disagree, I would ask them to list which passages discuss the afterlife and whether or not they see resurrection as anything beyond a corporate issue, specifically pertaining to individuals in Sheol/Hades. I certainly want to be fair, and not paint everyone under a broad stroke.

In contrast, a focus on the individual person can be seen as the core of Jesus' teaching, from the Sermon on the Mountain where he espouses individual responsibility, to apostolic descriptions of living as individual priests, to being raised as individuals like Daniel, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were. God fulfilled his promise of restoration to Israel, but that restoration transcended the corporate and ultimately pointed to the individual. In fact, one might argue that the story of the once-for-all corporate salvation of Israel pointed to individual salvation of each person coming into the kingdom for ages without end. Without including the individual body component to the covenantal transition, we do disservice to the power of God to incorporate these two elements together (the promise to resurrect Israel as a nation and to resurrect biologically dead individuals from Sheol).

Defining “the dead”

With this assessment, we come back to 1 Corinthians 15 and ask the question, who were “the dead (ones)?” Some Corinthians were saying “there is no resurrection of the dead” (15:12), so clearly we need to see what or who “the dead” were in order to draw a conclusion. This is important to ask because CBV advocates argue that “the dead” are not specifically biologically dead people in the grave or in Hades (though it might include them), but rather are the spiritually (or covenantally) dead, specifically those in old covenant Israel who were dead via the Law of Moses.

The argument is advanced that there were “some” in Corinth who were denying participation in Christ to the Jews, that they had missed out on the blessings of Christ, therefore they would not be raised into the body of Christ (see Sam Frost’s audio “Lectures on 1 Corinthians 15” and his book “Exegetical Essays on the Resurrection”).

I wanted to do an exhaustive search to see how the phrase “the dead” was most commonly used to see if it will shed a light on 1 Cor. 15. First I looked at the Old Testament, and searched for all uses of “the dead.” Excluding references to animals, I found 39 uses. They mostly were all references to either corpses after a battle or in a grave, or departed spirits in Sheol. A few did not specifically say spirits but simply referred to people who had died. All the uses I cite use the Hebrew word *muth* which is typical Hebrew word for die/death/the dead. It is the root word found in Genesis 2 and 3 pertaining to Adam’s sin. Here are some examples (I will not list all):

Numbers 16:48 ESV *And he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stopped.*

Deuteronomy 18:11 ESV *or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead.*

Judges 16:30 ESV *And Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines." Then he bowed with all his strength, and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he had killed during his life.*

2 Samuel 14:2 ESV *And Joab sent to Tekoa and brought from there a wise woman and said to her, "Pretend to be a mourner and put on mourning garments. Do not anoint yourself with oil, but behave like a woman who has been mourning many days for the dead."*

Psalms 88:5 ESV *like one set loose among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, like those whom you remember no more, for they are cut off from your hand.*

Psalms 88:10 ESV *Do you work wonders for the dead? Do the departed rise up to praise you? Selah.*

Psalms 115:17 ESV *The dead do not praise the LORD, nor do any who go down into silence.*

Ecclesiastes 9:5 ESV *For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten.*

Isaiah 8:19 ESV *And when they say to you, "Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter," should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living?*

Isaiah 14:9 ESV *Sheol beneath is stirred up to meet you when you come; it rouses the shades [Heb. *rephaim*] to greet you, all who were leaders of the earth; it raises from their thrones all who were kings of the nations. ["the shades" is not the Hebrew word *muth* but it is related as the next verse shows]*

Isaiah 26:14 ESV *They are [the] 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.*

Ezekiel 24:17 ESV *Sigh, but not aloud; make no mourning for the dead. Bind on your turban, and put your shoes on your feet; do not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of men."*

As you can see, in not one instance is "covenantal death" the meaning. These texts are all specific to dead people as spirits or corpses. If anyone thinks I have omitted passages that do demonstrate that the Hebrew word "the dead" are biologically alive but covenantally dead people, I welcome the input (again, recall my admission for a covenant death for Ephraim/northern Israel in Hosea, though they aren't called "the dead").

Turning to the New Testament, I wanted to narrow the search to the specific phrase "from the dead," with a focus on resurrection or being raised. This phrase is found 53 times in 52 verses. Here are all 53 examples:

Matthew 14:2 NASB *and said to his servants, "This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him."*

Matthew 17:9 NASB *As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead."*

Matthew 27:64 NASB *"Therefore, give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, otherwise His disciples may come and steal Him away and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last deception will be worse than the first."*

Matthew 28:7 NASB *"Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you."*

Mark 6:14 NASB *And King Herod heard of it, for His name had become well known; and people were saying, "John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why these miraculous powers are at work in Him."*

Mark 9:9-10 ESV *And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. (10) They seized upon that statement, discussing with one another what rising from the dead meant.*

Mark 12:25 NASB *"For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.*

Luke 9:7 NASB *Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was happening; and he was greatly perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead,*

Luke 16:30 NASB *"But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!'"*

Luke 16:31 NASB *"But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'"*

Luke 20:35 NASB *but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage;*

Luke 24:46 NASB *and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day,*

John 2:22 NASB *So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.*

John 12:1 NASB *Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.*

John 12:9 NASB *The large crowd of the Jews then learned that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead.*

John 12:17 NASB *So the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify about Him.*

John 20:9 NASB *For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.*

John 21:14 NASB *This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after He was raised from the dead.*

Acts 3:15 NASB *but put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses.*

Acts 4:2 NASB *being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.*

Acts 4:10 NASB *let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead--by this name this man stands here before you in good health.*

Acts 10:41 NASB *not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.*

Acts 13:30-31 NASB *"But God raised Him from the dead; (31) and for many days He appeared to those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who are now His witnesses to the people.*

Acts 13:34 NASB *"As for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no longer to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: 'I WILL GIVE YOU THE HOLY and SURE blessings OF DAVID.'*

Acts 17:3 NASB *explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ."*

Acts 17:31 NASB *because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."*

Acts 26:23 ESV *that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles." [I used the ESV here because the NASB does a terrible job translating this verse]*

Romans 1:4 NASB *who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord,*

Romans 4:24 NASB *but for our sake also, to whom it will be credited, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead,*

Romans 6:4 NASB *Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.*

Romans 6:9 NASB *knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him.*

Romans 6:13 NASB *and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.*

Romans 7:4 NASB *Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.*

Romans 8:11 NASB *But 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 10:7 NASB *or 'WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)."*

Romans 10:9 NASB *that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;*

Romans 11:15 NASB *For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?*

1 Corinthians 15:12 NASB *Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?*

1 Corinthians 15:20 NASB *But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.*

Galatians 1:1 NASB *Paul, an apostle (not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead),*

Ephesians 1:20 NASB *which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,*

Ephesians 5:14 NASB *For this reason it says, "Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you."*

Philippians 3:10-11 NASB *that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; (11) in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

Colossians 1:18 NASB *He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.*

Colossians 2:12 NASB *having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.*

1 Thessalonians 1:10 NASB *and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.*

2 Timothy 2:8 NASB *Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel,*

Hebrews 11:17-19 NASB *By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; (18) it was he to whom it was said, "IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED." (19) He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.*

Hebrews 13:20 NASB *Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord,*

1 Peter 1:3 NASB *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*

1 Peter 1:21 NASB *who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.*

I know that was a lot of reading, but it was necessary to demonstrate the obvious truth that “the dead” were in every situation but three a reference to previously biologically dead people, most often being Jesus. Eph. 5:11 is clearly referring to spiritual death or sin death. In the other two (Rom. 6:14, Rom. 11:15), they could be seen as arguing that the Romans should be acting holy in regards to personal sinning as though they had been resurrected either out from sin-death, or out from the afterlife realm of the dead, or both.

Someone might respond that Jesus’ death and resurrection was not merely biological but was of great spiritual and covenantal importance. Indeed it was! Such meaning can be found in some of the passages above like Colossians 1:18 and 1 Peter 1:3. Does this mean that “raised Him from the dead” did not mean that Jesus was raised personally, individually from Hades and the grave? Absolutely not. In fact, in the vast majority of these references, they were about people witnessing Jesus in Jerusalem after his resurrection. For example, if you look at Matt. 27:64, where the chief priests and scribes use the phrase “he has risen from the dead,” they clearly weren’t worried about the disciples claiming that he overcame sin-death, but were singularly worried about the claim that he came back from biological death.

The point is, one cannot claim that the most common use of “the dead” in either the OT or NT was only or primarily referring to spiritual death. The overwhelming use pertains to the biologically dead, to ones in (or in the case of Jesus, formerly in) Hades.

In Adam or in Christ?

You can’t have a discussion of “the dead” without looking at the “death” of Adam. A very important part of the argument for a corporate body view of “the dead” in 1 Cor. 15 is the relationship with Adam (15:21, 22, 45). Because Adam died “the day he ate,” the very day his “eyes were opened,” it must have been a spiritual (covenantal) death not a biological death, since he went on to live for hundreds of years more. Therefore, the death being overcome in 1 Cor. 15 cannot be biological death but must be “covenantal death,” i.e. the death of Adam, according to the CBV.

Of course, I agree that biological death was not the death Adam incurred the day he ate. I also agree that it was not a consequence of Adam’s sin, nor is it what is being “ended” in 1 Cor. 15. I believe that biological death existed before the time of Adam, and this death was the known foundation upon which the idea of a covenantal separation or death would have been understood.

Clearly there are references in the NT to the “spiritually dead” who were still biologically alive (e.g., John 5:24f). That said, many CBV advocates fail to see the other side of the coin in Adam’s death, which is detention in some sort of realm of the dead (“Sheol” or “Hades”) as a consequence of the staining of sin against a holy God. It is this other part of the story that we see throughout the rest of the bible. It is a grave concern (no pun intended) for many of God’s people. Had Adam not sinned, it is reasonable to conclude (as most covenant eschatology and covenant creation preterists do) that Adam would have gone on to live in heaven after his biological death.

Notice some passages which reflect this concern about what happens after death:

Job 7:7-10 ESV “Remember that my life is a breath; my eye will never again see good. (8) The eye of him who sees me will behold me no more; while your eyes are on me, I shall be gone. (9) As the cloud fades and vanishes, so he who goes down to Sheol does not come up; (10) he returns no more to his house, nor does his place know him anymore.”

Job 14:7-14 ESV *“For there is hope for a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its shoots will not cease. (8) Though its root grow old in the earth, and its stump die in the soil, (9) yet at the scent of water it will bud and put out branches like a young plant. (10) But a man dies and is laid low; man breathes his last, and where is he? (11) As waters fail from a lake and a river wastes away and dries up, (12) so a man lies down and rises not again; till the heavens are no more he will not awake or be roused out of his sleep. (13) Oh that you would hide me in Sheol, that you would conceal me until your wrath be past, that you would appoint me a set time, and remember me! (14) If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my service I would wait, till my renewal should come.”*

Psalms 22:29 ESV *All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, even the one who could not keep himself alive.*

Psalms 49:7-11, 14-15 ESV *Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life, (8) for the ransom of their life is costly and can never suffice, (9) that he should live on forever and never see the pit. (10) For he sees that even the wise die; the fool and the stupid alike must perish and leave their wealth to others. (11) Their graves are their homes forever, their dwelling places to all generations, though they called lands by their own names. (14) Like sheep they are appointed for Sheol; death shall be their shepherd, and the upright shall rule over them in the morning. Their form shall be consumed in Sheol, with no place to dwell. (15) But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me. Selah.*

The “death” that these people were afraid of was at the outset biological death, but what really concerned them was never returning from Sheol. Hope of this glimmers in Job and Psalms (and possibly to Abraham), but is not revealed until much later in the prophets and finally the Apostles:

Hebrews 2:14-18 ESV *Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, (15) and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. (16) For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. (17) Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. (18) For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*

So while Adam’s death was a “fellowship” death that very day based on his sin, the consequence (and remedy) of that death is the story of the rest of Scripture. How would this be fixed? It would be fixed by God becoming like his brothers in every respect, sharing in flesh and blood, and overcoming death in all its aspects, both covenantal and biological. Why fear biological death? Because it was the moment when the ultimate price would be paid for sin – separation from God. As long as one was still alive, they had “coverings” allowing them to be in the limited presence of God. This is the other side of the “death” coin that the CBV often misses.

Now, the Resurrection of “the dead” in 1 Cor. 15

Sam Frost makes the argument (based on Max King) that the problem that Paul was dealing with in Romans (specifically 11:11-24) – that some Gentiles were claiming that Jews were cut off so that they could be grafted in – is the same problem in 1 Corinthians. Some Gentiles, Frost says, were of the “Paul party” while some Jews were of the “Peter party” (citing 1 Cor. 1:12). The argument is that some Gentiles in Corinth

were denying total participation in (soteriological) resurrection life for the Jews, who were “dead” because they were under the Law (Old Covenant) which brought death. This therefore identifies “the dead” as not the biologically dead in the Hadean realm, but the covenantally dead under the Law.

I have two problems with this view. First, the Gentiles in Rome were not denying participation in Christ to all Jews (meaning, to those who were believers in Christ and in the church), but rather to all the remaining Jews who had not believed (those who were “broken off for their unbelief”). Second, and more importantly, there is no indication that Paul was addressing this concern at any point in 1 Corinthians. The “I am of Cephas, I am of Apollos,” et. al. remarks were not based on Jew/Gentile distinctions, but on personal preferences in styles of preaching and rhetoric for the different evangelists, as clearly seen in 1:17 to 4:21.

Frost then argues that Paul makes a “modus tollens” argument (I’ll explain “modus tollens” shortly) in 1 Cor. 15:12-19, which establishes that the resurrection deniers were not denying resurrection to themselves, to Jesus or to those asleep in Jesus, but only to some other group called “the dead” (i.e. the Jews, according to Frost). The modus tollens is an “if then” argument. “If p, then q; q is not, therefore p is not.” “If the dead are not raised, then Christ is not raised.” “If the dead are not raised, then you (Corinthians) are still in your sins.” Gordon Fee in his commentary on Corinthians raised this issue which Frost borrowed to make his argument. According to Frost, in order for this modus tollens argument to work on the Corinthians, they would have to reject the “q” or the consequences (they are still in their sins, Jesus hasn’t been raised, etc.), in order to change their belief on “p” (that the dead are not raised).

I agree that Paul used a modus tollens argument to demonstrate the absurdity (*reductio ad absurdum*) of the Corinthians belief that “the dead are not raised.” However, there is a problem with Frost’s leap of claiming Israel was the only group being denied resurrection. If we eliminate the groups of people to whom all the negative consequences towards resurrection apply (Christ, and those asleep in Christ), and accept that the Corinthian resurrection deniers were not denying Christ’s resurrection nor that of those asleep in Christ, then who does that leave? It leaves more than just the Jews. It would actually be for everyone who died before Christ. Resurrection was for all of the just and the unjust (John 5:28-29; Rev. 20:11-13), not just the Jews.

It is more logical to see that these Greeks in Corinth inconsistently believed that Christ was raised, while at the same time denied that anyone else would be raised. It makes more sense that the “some” who were denying the “resurrection of the dead” were the typical Greeks of the day who held that there is no resurrection of the dead. The dead either live forever in Hades as “shades,” or their “pneuma” (spirit) returns to the heavens (stars) since that is the material that the stars were made of. One of the common cosmological views of the day did allow for special heroes, kings and warriors to be resurrected, though this was a very rare occasion, so it would be possible for a Hellenistic Corinthian to believe that Jesus was raised but not anyone else. Corinth was only 40 miles from Athens, and we recall how the idea of the resurrection of Jesus was ridiculed in Athens in Acts 17:16-34. What was taught in Athens was also taught in Corinth, so it is much more plausible that we have Greeks in Corinth who were denying the general concept of resurrection from the dead for everyone. Paul employs at least two quotes from Greek philosophers (vs. 32-33), so it is not likely that the deniers were Jewish Sadducees since quoting Greek philosophers would hardly be effective. (For more information on common Greek views of the afterlife, see: “From Grave to Glory: Resurrection in the New Testament” by Murry J. Harris.)

Paul, in my mind, was talking to rookie Christians who became so by believing in the resurrected Christ. But, they didn't realize the implications of their new belief. Though their former belief systems of Stoicism and Epicureanism didn't believe in resurrection (and I think the first portion of Paul's argument is more tightly focused on the former Epicureans), they had accepted the resurrection of Christ in order to become

Christians. What they hadn't realized is that if they accepted this, then by implication they are accepting resurrection of everyone else as well.

So, in my opinion, Paul's logic in the chapter unfolds like this:

1. (v. 1-11) He reiterates the gospel that he used to save them (former Stoics and Epicureans), including Hebrew Scriptures as well as eye witness proof that Christ was in fact raised.
2. (v. 12) He recognizes that some of them don't believe in the resurrection of dead people.
3. (v. 13-15) He points out that if Christ is in fact raised then so is everyone else.
4. (v. 16-28) His logic loops around a few times to prove the universality of resurrection.
5. (v. 29-34) He goes on to address specific problems that Epicureans would have had with their new religion.
6. (v. 35-49) He then adopts and reimages some Stoic cosmological assumptions to explain the true nature of resurrection.
7. (v. 50-58) He completes the task by showing how this is all the culmination of the expectation in the Hebrew scripture.

If there is one thing CBV advocates cannot do, it is explain why there is so much overlap between Epicurean and Stoic worldview in this chapter. If the trick to Paul is to figure out the hidden 1/2 of the phone conversation, then I don't think you can figure out 1 Cor. 15 without engaging those groups. Clearly, in that part of the world, the majority of pagan converts would have come from those groups.

One last thing before moving on. Notice 1 Cor. 15:32, which is an Epicurean maxim (and is quoted in the LXX version of Isa. 22:13):

(ESV) (32) *What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."*

The death of "tomorrow" for Paul was not spiritual or covenantal death, it was clearly biological death. That was the context for Epicureans, and also was the context in Isaiah. This solidifies that "the dead" for Paul and the Corinthians were those who had died biologically and were in Hades, not the spiritually dead people of the old covenant.

A Solution to the Problem

It is important to understand what prompted Max King to develop the concept of a corporate body resurrection. First, from sources I have spoken with who were involved in the movement when it first began, there was much confusion on how to understand "resurrection" in the early days. Max King, being from the heritage I was in from birth (the Churches of Christ, in which I was a 4th generation minister), focused on the spiritual aspect of the kingdom and rebirth/regeneration/resurrection (e.g., Romans 6). I know all too well that it was common in our fellowship to focus on the spiritual kingdom since we were battling from our pulpits since at least the 1930's against premillennialism.

If the resurrection of the dead happened in AD70, and graves still existed, there is a need to explain how an invisible ("spiritual") resurrection took place that isn't "physical." The early pioneers wrestled with how to explain this from a preterist perspective. Max relied heavily on the book "The Body" by John A.T. Robinson; it is referenced throughout King's massive "The Cross and the Parousia" (a work I have plunged into several times over the last 9 years).

Robinson's "The Body" takes the basic approach that there were two different concepts of the body – a Greek one and a Jewish one. The Greek one according to Robinson (who quotes another) is that man was described as "an angel in a slot machine, a soul incarcerated into a frame of matter" (pg. 14). The Hebrew one was that man was "an animated body, not an incarcerated soul" (pg. 14). It was argued that the Greeks had a Platonic view of man, whereas the Hebrews had a holistic view of man connected to his community. Therefore Robinson presented only two real concrete ideas of a bodily resurrection for King to plug into a preterist view: either the body was the shell of human (the flesh), or it was a collective group of people (here, the "body of Christ).

The result was a view (current CBV) that every single eschatological instance of "the resurrection of the dead ones" in scripture has not to do with what is happening to dead people coming out of Hades at the great judgment in AD70, but only of the covenant transition away from the Law of Moses via the lens of spiritual regeneration and restoration of fellowship.

Scholars today (Engberg-Pederson, Long, M. Lee, Rasimus, Dunderberg, D. Martin, et. al) claim that Robinson's depiction of Greek and Hebrew cosmologies incorrectly described those of the first century. Not only did Robinson's view ignore the diversity within ancient Judaism, as well as that many Jews such as Philo of Alexandria held very Platonic concepts of the "body," it also was based on questionable assumptions about Greco-Roman culture; mainly, that the Greek culture of Jesus and Paul shared our modern Cartesian dichotomies of body and soul, which we now know are false.

Platonism had waned before the first century began. Around the century before Christ and at its peak during the time of Christ, the Roman world accepted the basic worldview of Stoics (and to a lesser degree, the Epicureans and Skeptics). This doesn't mean they practiced Stoicism or Epicureanism, but that how they came to understand the nature of man and the universe was couched in basic terms developed by these Greek thinkers. It was common "scientific" language on the street throughout the Empire. It would be as common to them as gravity or a superficial understanding of the Theory of Relativity is to us today. Just because everyone today knows what gravity is doesn't mean everyone is a physicist. The same was true in the first century with Stoic and Epicurean cosmology.

In Stoicism, the word "*pneuma*" (spirit) was the most refined, pure material that held all things together, and in large enough quantities became a sort of life force. Humans had far more and better *pneuma* than rocks. God (or the gods) had a perfect quality of *pneuma*. This overlapped to a large extent with the Hebrew concept of spirit ("*ruach*") being the breath of God, etc.

I propose a solution to the problem. Forcing a corporate body into all the uses of "body" in resurrection of the dead contexts clearly does not work. A body of flesh resurrection does not work for a variety of historical, archeological and theological reasons within a preterist schema. But a resurrection of a body made solely of *pneuma* does work on all levels theological, grammatical and historical.

When dealing with Greeks, Paul could draw on the Stoic system of physics to explain the Hebraic concept of *pneuma* as an animating force as well as a physical element of a person's body. For example, notice how Jesus used *pneuma* in his discussion with Nicodemus:

John 3:8 ESV "*The wind [Greek: pneuma] blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit [pneuma].*"

Notice the same Greek word underlies the translators' words "wind" and "Spirit." *Pneuma* would have been sort of like the rarest, highest quality gas that represented the person's body in the invisible realm. As a

person became a Christian he was issued God's *pneuma*. When God's *pneuma* interacted with a given Christian's *pneuma* it renovated it and became the source for a kind of “empowering datalink” if you will between not only God and man, but a Christian and another Christian.

The idea of being indwelt by Christ, Christ becoming a life giving spirit, and everyone in Christ being one body can be seen as quite literal due to their understanding of *pneuma*. Paul saw this new man as a superior creature to the simply flesh person (“natural man”) that represented all unbelievers. It also explains the horror of Christians having sex with a pagan temple prostitute.

As mentioned already, this understanding of *pneuma* would have been as intuitive to Paul's audience in Corinth as the modern definition of gravity is to us today. Paul is simply saying that the body that is resurrected from Hades, after the flesh is put in the ground, is made of *pneuma*, which is a type of substance that is suitable for heaven. It was the real individual that went into the grave, but it was the *pneuma* of that person that was resurrected from Hades. The flesh rots away. (For more information on this, please watch or listen to my 2014 Preterist Pilgrim Weekend speech “Stoics and Gnostics” available from Don Preston at the Preterist Research Institute.)

Notice how easy to understand 1 Cor. 15 becomes with this background in mind:

1 Corinthians 15:35-50 ESV *“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 (pneumatikon) body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual (pneumatikon) body. (45) Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit (pneuma). (46) But it is not the spiritual (pneumatikon) that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual (pneumatikon). (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.”*

There is much more that could be said regarding 1 Cor. 15, particularly the meaning behind Paul's use of the various terrestrial and celestial bodies in vss. 38-41, but we do not have the time to develop that now. One concept worth mentioning that I see behind the ultimate goal of the resurrection of the dead is the judgment of the gods (elohim) – Paul's “rulers, principalities and spiritual powers” – and their dethroning from the Divine Council of YHWH over the nations, and their replacement by the saints on thrones in the heavens. That view is based on the direction modern scholarship is advancing on certain texts such as Deut. 4 and 32, Psalms 82 and 89, Daniel 12, John 10 and in Second Temple literature (e.g. 2 Baruch, 4 Ezra, Testament of Moses, 4 Maccabees, 1 Enoch, Philo, etc.). For a mind-blowing podcast which takes this approach, see <http://www.nakedbiblepodcast.com/naked-bible-95-david-burnett-resurrection-and-the-death-of-the-gods/> (though from a partial-preterist position, it plugs perfectly into a full preterist viewpoint).

The guest speaker in the above podcast, David Burnett, has written a yet-to-be published paper (scheduled to be released later this year at the annual Society for Biblical Literature meeting) on this very subject. The abstract can be found here: <http://www.dburnett.com/?p=2640>.

What Now?

I see “resurrection from the dead” as a one-time event for the dead ones in Hades at AD70, and not an ongoing function post-AD70. Those saints are in heaven and are co-regents with Christ, ruling from thrones with him. Since Hades is no more, there is no longer a “resurrection out from among the dead ones” (the “dead ones” were in Hades/Sheol when that was written). But, since the “age to come” was described as one where those living in it have eternal life, and since Revelation describes those who die after the Judgment as “blessed” (Rev. 14:13), and since the church was to last “for all generations forever and ever,” I would argue that all those in Christ after AD70, who have Christ’s *pneuma* in themselves, already have resurrection life and are not resurrected out from sin-death or from Hades, but continue to live after death in their true pneumatic body given to them by the breath of God.

This view is not “futuristic” as some CBV advocates attribute to an “individual body view.” It is no more futuristic than the fact that the kingdom was consummated in AD70 but continues indefinitely with new people coming into it and being “raised unto eternal life” daily. If the existence of ongoing benefits for a one-time event means it’s futuristic, then the CBV would also be futuristic since they also believe in the on-going benefits of the cross and the kingdom as well.