

# The Seed Analogy in 1Cor 15:36-44

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## INTRODUCTION:

The New Testament epistle of *First Corinthians* was written by Apostle Paul from Ephesus to the church at Corinth (Achaia) during his third missionary journey. It was written in AD 57, less than a year before Paul visited Corinth to pick up their contributions and take them to the poor saints in Jerusalem. Paul wrote this letter to correct several moral, ethical, and doctrinal problems that had arisen in the church, as well as to answer some of their questions about the *resurrection* of the dead and the *bodily change* of the living. The church in Corinth was composed of both Jews and Greeks. The city of Corinth was well-known as having a lot of immoral people in it. The city was located on a narrow strip of land (an isthmus only four miles wide) between the Aegean and Adriatic seas. You might want to look it up on the maps in the back of your Bible. There were lots of sailors and traders coming in and out of its two ports (Cenchraea and Lechaemum) on a daily basis. Those sailors and traders brought a lot of wealth into the city, along with their moral decadency. Corinth is only 43 miles from Athens (as the crow flies). Both Athens and Corinth were important centers of Greek learning and pagan idolatry. It is no wonder that the church there had so many moral, ethical, and spiritual problems.

This epistle (letter) was written to correct some of the problems that were troubling the Church there. There were many problems in the church at Corinth. Almost every chapter lists another problem that they had. The primary problem is that they were divided against each other and they were very fleshly in their orientation and not listening to the Spirit leading in their life. Another of their problems was that some of them were denying a future resurrection and a bodily afterlife. Chapter 15 deals with that.

Here in 1 Corinthians 15 Paul seems to be addressing some there at Corinth who had been influenced by Greek philosophy to question the idea of being *raised out of Hades* and having a *bodily afterlife*. The Greeks saw the physical body as a prison of the soul and a corrupting influence upon the immortal soul. Death was a welcome release from that prison and its corrupting influence. Therefore, they preferred an afterlife in Hades in a *pure, disembodied, spirit form*. This is why they scoffed at Paul when he mentioned a resurrection back out of Hades and a bodily afterlife. They did not want a body in their afterlife. They preferred a pure disembodied spirit existence without a body.

There is no evidence that the church before 70, and especially afterwards, ever understood or taught a “collective body” concept of resurrection, nor that the resurrection deniers there in Corinth were basing their denial of a resurrection upon a condemnation and rejection of the Jews. But there is a ton of evidence in the context of both of Paul's Corinthian epistles to show that the resurrection deniers in Corinth were coming from a proto-Gnostic or Greek philosophical background, and were denying a future resurrection of the dead out of Hades on that basis.

## Commentary on 1Cor 15:1-49

**Verses 1-11** – You may want to have your Bible open to 1Cor 15, to read the verses as we talk about them. 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. Notice the four occurrences of the phrase "He was seen" in verses 5-8. These are eyewitness confirmations of the reappearance of Jesus in his self-same crucified body. These reappearances were not a ghost out of Hades or just a docetic or seeming resurrection of Jesus for evidentiary purposes. Nor were they merely metaphorical references to his collective body, the Church, being raised out of covenantal sin death into the life of the Kingdom. Instead, Paul said that Christ was raised out of Hades and reappeared in his self-same individual flesh and bones body that had died. Notice verse 11b - "so we preach and so you believed". This is the gospel Paul had preached to the Corinthians: the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus which they received, he says, they stood in it, verse 1, and believed it, verse 11, and Paul hoped that they had not believed in vain, verse 2.

**Verses 12-19** – There were some at Corinth who were "saying that there is no resurrection of the dead". Who were these resurrection deniers? As we noted before, Corinth was a great center of Greek learning and culture. So it would not be surprising to find out that those denying the resurrection had been influenced by Greek philosophy. "Judging from Paul's argument in this chapter, it seems that, whatever the particulars of their denial of the resurrection may have been, a large element of Greek rationalistic skepticism was at work" [Strimple, 310].

Robert Strimple notes: "While belief in the eternal survival of the soul was fairly common in the Greco-Roman world into which the first Christians came preaching the gospel, belief in bodily resurrection was looked upon as utter foolishness and rejected out of hand. Peter Bolt summarizes his study of the term *resurrection* in the literature of this period succinctly and helpfully: "When 'resurrection' proper is mentioned in non-biblical Greek literature, it is most commonly in a statement of its impossibility: the dead are not raised.'" [Strimple, 298-299]

Strimple again "reminds us of the popularity among the Greeks of a doctrine of the *immortality of the soul*, which denied the possibility, or even the desirability, of a resurrection of the body. Dahl sees the difficulties that these Corinthians were having with the doctrine of the resurrection as being "such as one would expect to find in a Greek or Hellenistic community conditioned to believe that all matter . . . is either evil or illusory, and who would tend to think of salvation in terms of the *immortality of the soul*." Cullmann reminds us that "in Athens there was no laughter until Paul spoke of the resurrection" (Acts 17:32). He suggests that "indeed for the Greeks who believed in the immortality of the soul it may have been harder to accept the Christian preaching of the resurrection than it was for others.'" [Strimple, 310]

Murray Harris agrees (FGTG, p. 190-191): "Why does Paul expound the doctrine of the resurrection at all and at such length? An influential sector of the Corinthian church evidently rejected the notion of resurrection (1Cor 15:12). . . . This vocal minority may have asserted that (1) the concept of resurrection is superfluous, since the soul perishes with the body; or (2) resurrection is impossible, since only the soul survives death and is immortal; or (3) the resurrection is past, since at their baptism Christians were spiritually raised with Christ to "walk in newness of life" (cf. Rom 6:4). Whatever the exact views of Paul's opponents at Corinth, evidently two aspects of resurrection were being denied – its futurity and its bodily nature."

Most commentaries see that kind of Greek philosophical or proto-Gnostic influence upon "some" there at Corinth. They were confused by their Hellenistic background. And Paul was trying to clear up their confusion. Paul reminded them that they already believed that Jesus had been raised from the dead, so why did they now doubt that others could be raised? If Jesus was

raised as they supposedly believed, then others also could be raised. And conversely, if the dead ones in Hades could not be raised out of there, then neither was Christ raised out of Hades. Yet they believed that Jesus had been raised. Paul said their faith in the resurrection of Christ was in vain, empty, and futile if there was no resurrection of the dead. That would mean that the dead saints had perished, that all saints were still in their sins, verse 17, and that their Christian lifestyle was the most pitiable, verse 19. This is why he later says, “if the dead are not raised, then let us eat, drink, for tomorrow we die”.

**Verses 20-23** - Since Christ was the first fruit of the resurrection harvest, his resurrection guaranteed that the rest of the dead ones would be raised out of Hades. When Christ ascended, the first fruit was presented to God making it possible for the rest of the dead to be raised. Notice what Paul wrote in verse 22 regarding when the resurrection would occur. The dead saints had not yet been raised when Paul wrote in AD 57, but **they will be (future tense) made alive at the Parousia**. This proves that the resurrection was not an ongoing process at the time Paul wrote, as the Collective Body View suggests. Verses 22-23 state that the resurrection was still future, and would occur at the Parousia. This future tense “will be made alive” does not work in the Collective Body View, but it fits the Individual Body View perfectly. And we need to note that this is not the only time in this chapter where a future tense is used in reference to the resurrection event. There are two more occurrences in verses 49 and 52.

**Verses 24-28** - Paul says that Christ was already reigning in some sense at the time he wrote. Notice he says, “for he must reign until he puts all of his enemies under his feet” (v. 25). What reign is this? It is certainly not his eternal reign, the eternal kingdom, which can only come at the Parousia. So what reign is this that Paul is referring to here in AD 57? Christ was already reigning in some sense, and if it's not his eternal reign, then it has to be his Millennial reign (cf. Rev. 20). Paul implies here that the Millennial reign between his first coming and his second coming was already in progress at that time. This was the time when Christ put down all of his enemies, took the Kingdom away from the Jews, gave it back to the Father to whom it belongs, and then sat down with the Father to co-reign with him eternally. Back in Samuel's day, when the Israelites rejected God as their King and demanded a King like all the other nations, God allowed them to set up Saul as their King. But soon afterwards God sent Samuel to anoint David as the successor, from whose descendants the Messiah Jesus would arise to take the Kingdom away from the Jews and give it back to God. That appears to be what Paul is alluding to here.

**Verse 29** - What was this **baptism for the dead**? I checked several dozen commentaries at four different seminary libraries. There are several different views on this *baptism for the dead*. Some suggested that it refers to the Jewish burial custom of washing or purifying a dead body before its burial, in order to ensure that this individual would be resurrected: i.e., *a purification in preparation for their resurrection*. In the case of dead relatives whose bodies were lost at sea, consumed by fire, or eaten by wild animals, a very close blood relative was allowed to be baptized or washed *on behalf of* that dead relative to ensure his or her share in the resurrection. Thus, it seems that Paul was referring to some form of *vicarious baptism* here. Paul is neither approving nor condemning this burial custom. He is simply pointing out the inconsistency of those saints at Corinth who were practicing that Jewish custom by saying in net effect, “If there's not going to be a resurrection, then why are you baptizing yourselves on behalf of your dead relatives? If they don't even believe their dead relatives are going to be raised from out of the dead ones in Hades, why practice it?”

**Verses 30-32** - Furthermore, if the dead are not going to be raised and there was not going to be a conscious afterlife, why suffer persecution and deprive oneself of this life's benefits? Why not rather indulge in all life's pleasures to maximum? Instead of sacrificing for something you don't even believe in, just go party hearty if there's no resurrection. This kind of argument about their inconsistency would not make much sense against the Corinthians if they were denying a collective body resurrection to Old Testament Israel. But it makes total sense if the resurrection deniers there in Corinth were coming from a Greek philosophical or proto-Gnostic background.

Notice that Paul uses Greek terminology ("fools" - Gr. "aphron", v. 36) and Greek philosopher quotes to critique it (cf. 1 Cor. 15:28-34). There could have been some other influences there also, but the main problem at Corinth and Thessalonica seems to have been coming from their Greek background. The Greeks had real difficulty with any kind of "bodily" afterlife since they viewed the body as an evil prison which they wished to be rid of in the afterlife. They viewed the body as necessarily evil, therefore an afterlife could not be in a body. Paul agrees partially with them that the bodies we now have cannot be used in the afterlife ("corruption cannot inherit incorruption", v. 50). But he refutes their disembodied afterlife fallacy when he states that there are different kinds of bodies. Not all bodies are subject to corruption. Jesus was the first to have an incorruptible body, and he gives all of His saints an incorruptible body for their afterlife in heaven. This was something the Greeks had not conceived of. They rejected any kind of body in the afterlife since they viewed the body as necessarily evil. Paul says there are different kinds of bodies (corruptible and incorruptible). We certainly do not take our corrupted and corruptible bodies to heaven with us, but we do get a new uncorrupted and incorruptible body like Christ's to dwell in heaven with. This is Paul's whole point here in 1 Cor. 15:37-41.

**Verses 33 and 34** - Paul rebuked the Corinthians for hanging around with *evil company* who were corrupting them, and for listening to some who do not have the knowledge of God. The Greek philosophers in Corinth and nearby Athens would certainly fit that description. When Paul visited Athens, he noted how the city was full of idols, one of which was dedicated "*to the unknown god*". The Greeks did not have a correct understanding of God, so it is not surprising that the Greek philosophers in Athens scoffed at Paul when he taught the resurrection of the dead. Therefore it seems likely that these resurrection deniers in Corinth had been confused by hanging around with Greek philosophers. And notice that Paul said in Athens that they had an idol that was dedicated to *the unknown god*. Here in 1 Cor 15:33-34 he says some who *do not have the knowledge of God*. See the similarity? The Athenian philosophers had an *unknown god*, and the resurrection deniers in Corinth *did not have the knowledge of God*.

**Verse 35-38** - Those who had been influenced by Greek philosophy to deny the resurrection were evidently asking these two questions in verse 35: (1) How are the dead raised up? (2) And with what body do they come? What were they really asking? Here it is: "*How in the world can dead people be raised out of Hades? And if so, what kind of body are they going to have when they come out of Hades?*" Then Paul answers both of those questions in the following verses. Many commentaries note that both questions seem to be coming from a strong Greek Platonic influence. Paul answered these questions by using several analogies or comparisons. He uses these comparisons to help them understand HOW the dead will be raised, and the kind of BODY they will get when they come out of Hades.

**Verse 36** - Paul begins by comparing the resurrection to the sprouting of seeds: “What you sow is not made alive unless it dies.” Paul is pointing out that a seed does not receive its new plant body until after the old seed body breaks open and is laid aside. If any of you have gardens, or grew up on a wheat farm, you'll understand exactly what he's saying here. The plant body is not going to rise up from the ground until the old seed body, the outer shell of the seed, breaks open so that the germ inside can sprout. The seed does not receive its new plant body until after the old seed body breaks open and is laid aside and dies. It's the same for the saint. We cannot have our new immortal bodies until after our old mortal bodies have died (or been changed). We will talk more about the *bodily change* of the living saints in our following presentations. But here in this section of 1Cor 15, we are focused on understanding what the *resurrection of the dead* is all about.

Some commentators are puzzled here in verse 36 by Paul's statement that the *seed does not die until after it is sown*. Since those writers think the *sowing of the seed* is the *burial of the body* in the ground, the implication is that people were being buried alive, i.e., they were being sown into the ground before they died. However, other commentaries remind us that **the sowing is referring to the birth of the person into the world**. The word "sowing" here is the word *scattering*. Remember how the mythological Johnny Appleseed went around with his bag of apple seeds, scattering them everywhere on the surface of the ground. He didn't dig a hole, and put the seed in the hole, and then cover it back up again. Paul is talking about *scattering* the seed on the face of the ground. He is referring to *our birth as the time when we're sown into the world*. You would be amazed how many commentaries miss that point. But it's crucial to understanding Paul's *seed analogy* here. The sowing is obviously NOT the burial of the body in the ground, since that would mean that people were buried alive, and then died after they were buried. Many commentaries instead remind us that the *sowing is referring to the birth of a person into the world*. Thus Paul is saying that humans are **sown into the world at their birth**, and their physical bodies in which they are sown have to die before they can receive their new immortal bodies. This is exactly what happens to a seed. Its new plant body cannot rise up from the ground until the old seed body dies, breaks open, and falls away. Understanding what the sowing is, is absolutely critical here. Paul uses this *seed analogy* to illustrate the point about the differences between *seed bodies* and *plant bodies*. The seed analogy was not new to the Jews or the Greeks. There are several examples of it among the Greek philosophers and Jewish rabbis in their explanations about the resurrection and afterlife.

Notice also here in verse 36 that Paul defines for us what the “it” is. He is referring to “what you sow” (i.e., the seed). It is not referring to merely the outer shell of the seed (i.e., the seed body). Instead, it is referring to the whole seed, including its outer shell and its inner germ. Note that Paul defines the “it” here in verse 36 where it is used for the first time in this context. Then he uses this pronoun “it” again in verses 38, 42, 43, and 44. However, it is most clearly defined as a reference to the seed in verses 36-38 where he refers to the “it” as being “*what you sow*” (i.e., the whole seed, not just its outer body). We will discuss this more below in our comments on verses 42-44.

**Verses 37-38** are two more verses which most commentaries misunderstand. Look at it in your Bible and you'll see why. Here in verses 37-38, Paul clearly says that the body in which we are sown into the world is **NOT** the body we will have after the resurrection. Now, most futurists would agree with that verse if you could leave out one word. And guess which word that is? The word **NOT**! They want it to say that the body in which we are sown **IS** the same body that we will have after the resurrection. Now what's wrong with that picture? Paul says that God gives

the seed a new body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds (*individuals*) a body of its own. This is talking about a bunch of individuals getting new bodies – NOT one big collective seed getting a new body. Notice it says, “*to each of the seeds a body of its own.*” This verse certainly does not lend any support to the collective body idea. In fact, it totally negates the collective body view. Verse 38 is clearly talking about a group of individuals, each of whom get their own individual bodies. God gives to each of the seeds a body of its own. In other words, we are born, we live, and we die in one kind of body, but enjoy eternal life in Heaven in a different kind of body, just like individual seeds shed their outer shells and get new plant bodies.

Futurists who take the *bodies out of the ground* (BOG) view of resurrection have difficulty explaining these two verses, and you can see why. It doesn't say what they need it to say. It doesn't fit their paradigm. Paul at least is teaching *two different kinds of bodies*, if not *two different bodies altogether*. The latter concept, two different bodies, is clinched in verse 38 where Paul says that God gives each of the individual seeds a body of its own. They already had bodies (their seed bodies). Why can't they get those bodies back? But Paul says in verse 38 that God gives each of the seeds another body (their new plant bodies). Thus when the seed sprouts, the old seed body dies and returns to dust, while the new plant body rises up from the inner germ of the seed. Note also that each of the seeds, each of those individuals – not a collective body – receives its own new body. This does not work in the collective body view, but it perfectly fits the individual body view.

Futurists really have difficulty explaining these two verses. They are so convinced that their self-same physical bodies (seed bodies) have to be raised out of the ground that they are blind to the argument that Paul is actually making here. Verses 37-38 absolutely exclude the idea of the self-same physical body being the afterlife body. Paul explicitly says that the body in which we are sown into the world at birth **is NOT** the body we will have in our afterlife. However, Paul does not stop here to explain why we cannot get our self-same physical bodies back for our afterlife in heaven. He doesn't need to, because he knows the Greeks don't even believe that the physical body is going to be in their afterlife anyway, so it's a moot point to them. But it's not a moot point for us. We need to explain that. There was no need to waste words here on that idea, since the Corinthians already agreed that the self-same, mortal, corrupted, physical bodies could not be used in the afterlife. In fact, that was the whole basis for their rejecting the resurrection, because they didn't want a bodily afterlife in their old corrupted bodies. So Paul doesn't waste very many words arguing that the body they would have in their afterlife was NOT the body in which they were born into the world. It was instead a new body, and a different kind of body, just like the *plant body* is both a different body and a different kind of body than the *seed body*. And the reason why our physical bodies cannot be used in our afterlife is because of that mortality and fleshly corruption. Because of our sin, our bodies are corrupted and mortal, subject to death and decay. Our mortal bodies have to die and return to dust permanently. And we have to get new immortal bodies that God gives to us, which are patterned after the glorious immortal spiritual individual heavenly body of Jesus.

However, the physical body of Jesus was **not** subject to death, nor corrupted by the flesh, *because Jesus never sinned*. His body was able to die if he wished to die as a substitute for our sins, but it was not subject to death otherwise. And if he allowed his body to die, it did not have to stay dead or return to dust permanently like ours do. Notice what Jesus said about this: “*I have life in myself; no one can take it from me. I have the power to lay this body down and the power to pick it back up again.*” No one else can say this. Why? Because everyone else has sinned. Jesus was sinless. And because of that He could get his self-same uncorrupted body back. Jesus

was raised back out of Hades and picked up His self-same uncorrupted body. But everyone else has sinned, so we cannot get our self-same bodies back *permanently* like Christ did.

All futurists misunderstand this. They assume that since Jesus got his self-same body back, that we're going to get our self-same bodies back also. They point to Lazarus and others who were raised back out of Hades to *temporarily* dwell in their resuscitated physical bodies again. But those resurrections were only *temporary*. They still had to die again and go back to Hades, where they would wait in disembodied form until the *permanent* resurrection out of Hades at the Parousia, at which time they would receive their new *permanent* immortal bodies that were reserved in heaven for them. So, flesh and blood bodies cannot inherit the heavenly afterlife.

The Greeks agreed with Paul that we cannot take our *mortal bodies* with us into the afterlife. The proof of that was in every graveyard. But that proves nothing against the idea that each of us get a new kind of body for our afterlife. That is what the Greeks misunderstood. They assumed that the present state of disembodiment in Hades was the only kind of afterlife they would ever have. They did not believe the dead could be raised out of Hades, nor have any kind of bodily existence in their afterlife. That is because they only believed in one kind of body (the physical mortal body). It was a real game-changer for them when Paul informed them about getting new *immortal bodies* for their afterlife in heaven. Hades was a temporary place of disembodiment until the resurrection. At the resurrection, their disembodied souls were raised out of Hades to put on their new immortal bodies and go to heaven for their afterlife.

One other point that we need to mention here in verse 37, which again rules out any possibility of a collective body application, is found in the *future tense* GENESOMENON (fut. mid. participle) which is translated "*shall be*" in the phrase "*the body that shall be.*" This is referring to the plant body which each of the seeds *would get* (future tense) when its inner germ sprouted into its new plant body form. Note that the receiving of that new plant body form is future tense, to occur at the resurrection event when God will give each of the seeds its own new plant body form. This future tense receiving of their new bodies shows clearly that there was not a "*dying-rising reciprocity of a collective body*" occurring at the time Paul wrote to the Corinthians (AD 57). Instead, he is referring to the new kind of plant bodies that each of the seeds would receive (future tense) at the resurrection event. This rules out the collective body interpretation of these two verses (1Cor 15:37-38).

**Verses 39-41** - These three verses introduce a few more analogies: different kinds of *flesh*, different kinds of *bodies*, and different levels of *glory*. The purpose of these comparisons is to underscore the fact that our fleshly earthly bodies are not the only kind of bodies that we will ever have. Our afterlife is embodied, even though we will get another kind of body. This is what the Greeks there in Corinth were missing. They rejected the resurrection and the bodily afterlife because they thought there was only one kind of body, the physical body, which obviously did not go with them into the afterlife. Paul agrees with the Greeks that we do not have our mortal fleshly bodies in our afterlife, but that does not mean that our afterlife in heaven after the resurrection will be disembodied. These analogies that Paul presents here are designed to show that there is more than one kind of body, and that the bodies we wear in this earthly life are NOT the same kind of bodies that we will have in our afterlife.

There are different kinds of flesh and different levels of glory between terrestrial and celestial bodies as well as between the sun, moon, and stars. All of these analogies reinforce the point that there are different kinds of bodies. There's not just one kind of body. The Greeks there at Corinth only thought of the body in fleshly terms, as being something that we wear only in this

life on earth. They didn't really realize that there are *different kinds of bodies*, and that the afterlife could very easily be a *bodily* afterlife, if it was a different kind of body than the mortal fleshly body. Paul reassured those Christians in Corinth that their afterlife would not be disembodied. But it would be in a different kind of body than what they had here on earth.

Notice how Paul counters the muddled thinking in verse 36 where he says “*you foolish one, you simpleton, you muddled thinking person.*” That’s the least favorite term that a Greek philosopher would ever want to have applied to him. So if the resurrection deniers were coming from a Greek philosophical influence, this term would have been shock therapy. It would not have bothered Jewish deniers of the resurrection to be called foolish. They would have shrugged it off. But it certainly would have bothered the Greeks. They took great pride in being wise and avoiding anything foolish. So the usage of this term “foolish” in reference to the resurrection deniers is another strong indicator that the deniers were being influenced by Greek philosophy.

One of the reasons the Greeks rejected the idea of a bodily afterlife was because they wanted to be free of the corrupting influence of the physical body. They wanted to have a pure spiritual afterlife that was free of any fleshly limitations, temptations, or other corrupting influences of the fleshly body. That's certainly a good concept and Paul doesn't challenge that here. But he shows that the way we will be free of those corrupting influences of the fleshly body is NOT by being disembodied, but rather by having a new kind of body which is not subject to those corrupting influences.

Paul does not criticize their desire for a pure uncorrupted and perfected afterlife. Instead he redirects it into supporting his argument for a different kind of body in the afterlife. Thus he agrees with the Greeks that our afterlife cannot be in a fleshly, mortal, sinful corrupted body. But here's the key point that Paul did not want those Greek Christians to miss: *their afterlife would not be disembodied*. That's where they just didn't understand it correctly. They weren't thinking straight. They were muddled in their thinking. That's why he uses these analogies to clarify it for them.

Paul implies that the afterlife will not be in a physical, mortal, fleshly body. But that does not mean that it cannot be in some other kind of body such as an immortal, incorruptible, spiritual, heavenly body like Christ's glorified body. Thus Paul used the Greek corruptible body argument against their disembodied afterlife view. So that instead of ruling out a bodily afterlife, it actually supported a bodily afterlife in a new kind of body that was suited to its new heavenly environment. And since Hades was a place of dis-embodiment, they needed a resurrection out of Hades in order to go to Heaven where they could dwell in new immortal bodies. That's an important point. It is crucial to Paul's argument here.

**Verses 42-44** - After establishing his point about different kinds of bodies, Paul now continues his discussion about the *seed analogy* which he introduced in verses 36-38. Just as seeds are not sown in the kind of plant bodies that they will have after they sprout, so it is with human bodies. Notice what he says in verse 38, “God gives **it** a body.” Now, who or what is this “**it**” which gets a new body? Compare verses 36-38 and verses 42-44. The answer is in verse 38. “**It**” is the seed, “*that which you sow.*” The “**it**” is NOT the body. It is the **seed** which is sown in one kind of body (the seed body), and then raised in another kind of body (the plant body).

So the “**it**” is referring to the **whole seed**, not just to the outer shell of the seed. Nor is the “**it**” referring only to the inner germ of the seed. It is the **whole seed** being referred to here, including the inner germ and whatever bodily form it happens to have at the time. This is very important. If we do not know what the “**it**” is, we will misunderstand what Paul is saying here in



verses 36-44. The “**it**” is the **whole seed**, including its **inner germ** and its **outer body** (either its *seed body* or its *plant body*). So God gives “**it**” (each individual seed or person – NOT a collective body) a new body at its resurrection. The individual seed (or person) is sown into the world in a body that is subject to corruption, dishonor, and weakness. But it is raised in a body that is incorruptible, glorious and powerful. The seed, which is the individual person, is sown in a **natural body**, but is raised in a **spiritual body**. Paul says “**it**” is sown, and “**it**” is raised. “**It**” is the seed that is sown in one kind of body (the seed body), and then raised in another kind of body (the plant body).

We need to note that this *resurrection of the dead* here in verse 42 is referring to the *dead saints* in Hades who were awaiting their resurrection. It is not talking about *living saints*. Dead people are **raised**, but living people are **changed** (see 1Cor 15:52). Living saints cannot be “raised out of the dead ones in Hades” because they have not yet died and gone to Hades. We can see that more clearly in verses 51-54 where Paul talks about the *bodily change* of the living saints that would occur in conjunction with the resurrection.

So the seed (the individual person) is *sown into the world* in a body that is subject to corruption, dishonor, and weakness, and then raised in a body that's incorruptible, glorious and powerful (patterned after the glorious body of Jesus). The seed (the individual person) is sown in a *natural* body, but raised in a *spiritual* body. Paul is speaking of individual seeds here, not a collective body. There is no collective body anywhere in these verses. Yet that does not prevent the Collective Body guys from inserting it into the text anyway. But it is obvious that Paul is talking about individual bodies here, especially in verse 38 where he says, “to each of the seeds a body of its own.”

So the “**it**” here is talking about the whole seed or person, including its inner germ and outer shell. “**It**” is not referring to the outer shell (the body only), but rather to the whole seed (the whole person, including both body and soul). This becomes clear when we notice that Paul talks about the “**it**” dying and the “**it**” rising here in verses 42-44. “**It**” dies and “**it**” rises. What part of the seed dies (outer shell) and what part of the seed rises (inner germ)? When we answer that question it forces us to realize that the “**it**” is talking about the whole seed, part of which (the outer shell) dies, and part of which (the inner germ) rises. So the “**it**” is the whole seed including its inner germ and its outer shell. See the color-highlighted text on the next page for more info on the identity of the “**it**” here.

Another point here that we must not miss, is that *the new plant body comes from the inner germ of the seed, not from the outer shell of the seed casing*. It is the outer shell of the body which dies, while the inner germ rises into “**its**” new plant body form. This had to be a game changer argument for those Corinthian Christians who had been influenced by Greek philosophy to reject a resurrection of souls out of Hades and a bodily afterlife. Paul is clearly affirming a bodily afterlife here, and shows that the new body is a different kind of body, and that it comes from the inner germ (the inner man), and not from its resuscitated, reanimated, mortal, corruptible, physical body (the outer shell).

## The Seed Analogy (1Cor 15:35-44, NKJV)

Who is the “it” referred to here in 1Cor 15:36-38 and 42-44? See my comments in the document above for more information on this. Notice below the two different color-highlighted phrases in this text. The yellow highlights are referring to the **SEED**, while the blue highlights are referring to the **BODY** that the seed possesses. See if you can use these color highlights to discover why the pronoun “it” mentioned in verses 36, 38, 42, 43, and 44 has to be referring to the whole **SEED** (including its inner germ and outer shell), and not just to the seed **BODY** (outer shell).

[35] But someone will say, “How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?”

[36] Foolish one, **what you sow [the seed]** is not made alive unless **it [the seed]** dies.

[37] And **what you sow [the seed]**, you do not sow **that body that shall be**, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other *grain*.

[38] But God gives **it [the seed]** a **body** as He pleases, and to **each seed** its own **body**.

### Digression on different kinds of flesh and bodies, and different levels of glory:

[39] All flesh *is* not the same flesh, but *there is* one *kind of* flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, *and* another of birds.

[40] *There are* also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial *is* one, and the *glory* of the terrestrial *is* another.

[41] *There is* one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for *one* star differs from *another* star in glory.

[42] So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. **It [the seed] is sown** in corruption, **it [the seed] is raised** in incorruption.

[43] **It [the seed] is sown** in dishonor, **it [the seed] is raised** in glory. **It [the seed] is sown** in weakness, **it [the seed] is raised** in power.

[44] **It [the seed] is sown** a **natural body**, **it [the seed] is raised** a **spiritual body**. There is a **natural body**, and there is a **spiritual body**.

If we ask a wheat farmer “**what is sown,**” he would answer “**the seed.**” He does not sow a **body**, but rather a **seed** which has both an inner germ and an outer body. The seed is sown in its seed body form, and when the hard outer shell of the seed absorbs moisture, it softens up allowing the inner germ to sprout and burst through the outer shell. The softening and breaking open of the outer shell is the death of the **seed body**, which enables the sprouting forth of the inner germ into its new **plant body**.