

THE USE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT IN 1 CORINTHIANS 15:44-49

John W. Latham

INTRODUCTION

First Corinthians 15:44-49 is at once a very significant and a very perplexing passage. Richard Gaffin writes, “Compact modes of expression and density of thought also make it [1 Cor 15:45-49]...one of the most difficult.”¹ Indeed, the words of this short passage seem to be pregnant with theological content. Within five short verses, Paul touches on various aspects of soteriology, Christology, anthropology, and eschatology. Interestingly, the entire passage is built upon a clear Old Testament foundation. Though only Genesis 2:7 is quoted, other passages are alluded to, particularly several other passages from Genesis, making the first chapters of Genesis central to Paul’s argument.² Especially striking is the fact that this passage quotes and alludes to Genesis in the context of expounding “New Testament doctrines” such as Christology and eschatology. The overall context of the passage is Paul’s discussion of the resurrection of the body, which the New Testament teaches will take place in the last days. Despite focusing on the last days, Paul quotes Scripture that takes place in the first days (creation). The result is a complex argument explaining the resurrection of the body by comparing the first and last Adams.

¹ Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., *Resurrection and Redemption: A Study in Paul’s Soteriology* (Philipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 1978), 78.

² N.T Wright agrees, writing “Genesis 1-3 forms a subtext for the whole chapter, and even when Paul appears to be merely offering illustrations of his point these, too, are drawn from the creation stories.” N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 313.

This article will not attempt to solve all the interpretive problems in this passage. Rather, it will focus on Paul's use of the Old Testament within the passage and seek to understand how this use of the OT contributes his argument. The thesis is that Paul builds his argument upon an exegetical basis from the OT rather than simply using the OT as proof texts of his argument. First, we will introduce the context of 1 Cor 15:44-49, seeking to understand the overall flow of Paul's argument in the chapter. Second, we will identify Paul's particular uses of the OT within this passage. Third, though somewhat controversial, we will argue that the most likely background for the passage is the OT text. Fourth, Paul's use of the OT will then be examined in light of the context and OT background. Finally, this article will be concluded by summarizing the theological importance of Paul's use of Scripture.

THE CONTEXT OF 1 CORINTHIANS 15:44-49

Before examining 1 Cor 15:44-49 and Paul's use of the OT in that passage, it will be helpful to first sketch some of the background of the passage. Much of the content of 1 Corinthians is Paul's response to questions asked by the Corinthian church³ or particular problems within the church.⁴ David Garland notes that Paul "is interested in the Corinthians' social, moral, spiritual, and theological development, since, for him, these things are all tied together."⁵ In seeking to understand Paul's argument in chapter 15, one must keep this overall purpose in mind.

Thus understood, 1 Corinthians 15 should be read as Paul's correction of a theological issue within the church. Indeed, the issue is made clear in verse 12 where Paul writes "how can

³ For example, see the repeated phrase, "Now concerning..." (Περὶ δὲ) in 7:1; 7:25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1; and 16:12.

⁴ For example, Paul addresses divisions in the church, sexual immorality, lawsuits, etc. for the purpose of correction.

⁵ David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2003), 14.

some of you say that there is no resurrection from the dead?”⁶ In chapter 15, then, Paul is addressing a misunderstanding of eschatology in Corinth. Some of the Corinthians were denying the existence of a future resurrection. Scholars have identified the exact problem as either an instance of over-realized eschatology (the resurrection has already happened and it was spiritual)⁷ or a simply denial of the possibility of bodily resurrection (future salvation without a resurrection of the body).⁸ In any case, Paul responded to the problem with an extended argument defending the notion of a future resurrection of the body.⁹

In addressing this issue, Paul begins with a restatement of the gospel message, which is of first importance (v. 3) and shows that the resurrection of Christ is essential to the gospel (vv. 12-19). As already mentioned, v. 12 introduces the basic problem being addressed and is followed by Paul’s answer to the problem. The point is clear – if Christ is not raised, then there is no gospel. Verses 20-34 then move into showing that just as Christ was raised from the dead, so shall his people be raised. Christ was raised from the dead during his first coming. Those who follow him will be raised from the dead when he returns (v. 23). This section also introduces the Adam/Christ comparison that will be central to vv. 44-49.

Verse 35 begins the second part of Paul’s response to the issue of resurrection and the more immediate context of the passage being examined in this study. Beginning in v. 35, Paul turns to address a further objection concerning the resurrection: the nature of the resurrection body. It is possible that some objected to the idea of a future resurrection on the grounds that

⁶ All Scripture quotations in this article are from the English Standard Version.

⁷ So Gordon Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994), 262.

⁸ So Garland, 678.

⁹ Wright notes that “First Corinthians 15 provides a long argument, one the most sustained Pauline treatments of any topic.” *Resurrection*, 277.

“earthly embodied existence is completely incompatible with heavenly spiritual existence.”¹⁰ In other words, since they could not comprehend how of the resurrection of the body could take place, they denied that it was even possible.

Having already affirmed the certainty of the future resurrection of the body on the basis of Christ’s resurrection, Paul then uses a series of analogies to explain that the resurrection body would be similar, but not identical, to the pre-death body. Fee explains, “It [the resurrection body] will have continuity in that it is the *present body* that is raised; it will have discontinuity in that it will be “transformed” and thereby fitted for the life of the future, the life of heaven.”¹¹ Thus, Paul shows that just as a seed must die in order to grow, so the earthly body dies before being transformed into the spiritual body. In both cases (the seed and the body), it is God who does the work of transformation. In vv. 39-41, Paul grants that there are various polarities in the created world – human and animal flesh, heavenly and earthly bodies, and the sun and the moon. The problem is not that the created world has differences within it. Rather, the problem is that the denial of a bodily resurrection fails to take into account God’s power to transform the present body into a glorified body. Thus, while other polarities are named, the purpose of Paul’s use of these analogies is to bring focus onto the primary polarity of the passage – the physical and the spiritual bodies.¹²

In vv. 42-44, Paul expounds the differences between the present body and the resurrected body by showing that just as there is a difference between the seed and the plant that it becomes, so the present body is different from the future, spiritual body. The contrasts used in these verses

¹⁰ Garland, 725.

¹¹ Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 262.

¹² Benjamin L. Gladd, “The Last Adam as the ‘Life-Giving Spirit’ Revisited: A Possible Old Testament Background of One of Paul’s Most Perplexing Phrases,” *WTJ* 71 (2009): 297-309.

focus on the power of God to transform bodies that are perishable, natural, and sown in dishonor and weakness into bodies that are imperishable, spiritual, and raised in glory and power. Thus, the point of these contrasts is not so much the differences between the present life and the future life, but the power of God to raise the dead and transform fallen bodies into glorious, heaven-ready bodies. This point, then, leads into the passage in focus.

THE OT AS BACKGROUND FOR 1 CORINTHIANS 15:44-49

In 1 Cor 15: 44-49, Paul makes an extended contrast of the first and last Adams. This idea forms the center of the passage and must be understood properly in order to rightly interpret the text. Much scholarly ink has been spilled investigating the historical origin of Paul's comparison of Adam and Christ.¹³ Within the literature, there have been four basic proposals – Gnosticism¹⁴, Philo¹⁵, Jewish tradition¹⁶, and the Old Testament.

While some of the arguments for Gnosticism, Philo, and Jewish tradition have some merit, many scholars now believe that the origin of Paul's doctrine of the two Adams in 1 Cor 15 lies both in his experience with the risen Christ and from his own exegesis of the Old Testament. Paul is not drawing on rabbinic literature, but rather the OT text itself. As Gladd writes, "Since Paul saw Christ as the image of God and Wisdom of God, he then worked backward, using the OT and later Jewish developments, and determined that Christ is indeed the last Adam who has

¹³ For a thorough examination of these proposals, see Stephen Hultgren, "The Origin of Paul's Doctrine of the Two Adams in 1 Corinthians 15.45-49" *JSNT* 25.3 (2003): 343-370. See also Sang-Won (Aaron) Son, *Corporate Elements in Pauline Anthropology: A Study of the Terms, Idioms, and Concepts in the Light of Paul's Usage and Background* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2001), 66-82.

¹⁴ For example, see James D. G. Dunn, "1 Corinthians 15:45 – last Adam, Life-Giving Spirit" in *Christ and the Spirit in the New Testament* (ed. Barnabas Lindars and Stephen Smalley; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 127.

¹⁵ See for example, Anthony Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1283-1284.

¹⁶ Hultgren, 360-366.

come to restore Israel and bring about the new creation.”¹⁷ The point here is that Paul’s salvation experience drove him back to the OT Scriptures to read them in light of his new understanding of Christ as the promised Messiah. Thus, the origin of Paul’s Adam/Christ doctrine is both his experience of Christ and his understanding of the OT.

N.T. Wright argues that the background for Paul’s doctrine is the Old Testament teaching on Adam and Israel as developed in Jewish literature. Wright shows that God’s purposes for Adam were passed on to Abraham and his family. Summarizing the Jewish reflection on the OT text, he writes, “God’s purposes for the human race in general have devolved on to, and will be fulfilled in, Israel in particular. Israel is, or will become, God’s new humanity.”¹⁸ Wright demonstrates this development from within the text of Genesis and the subsequent OT and Jewish writings. The thrust of the argument is clear – there is a second Adam in the OT and Jewish literature and it is collective Israel rather than an individual.

Wright then shows how this background is related to Paul’s teaching in 1 Cor 15. Paul agrees that there is a new humanity, a last Adam, but it is not Israel in general. Rather, it is Christ. He summarizes the point by writing, “the role traditionally assigned to Israel had devolved on to Jesus Christ. Paul now regarded him, not Israel, as God’s true humanity.”¹⁹ Thus, while the Jewish literature may have provided some background for Paul’s argument, he did not simply follow along with the Jewish interpretations. Rather, he corrected them in light of his experience with Christ.

¹⁷ Gladd, 298, n. 7; cf. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 793. Gladd argues specifically for Gen 5:3 as foundational for Paul’s understanding of Christ as the last Adam. This will be dealt with in more detail below.

¹⁸ N.T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 20.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 26.

This explanation for the origin of Paul's teaching appears to be the most likely approach for a number of reasons. First, it does not depend on a tenuous historical reconstruction. The Gnostic and Philonic interpretations hinge on presupposed reconstructions of historical circumstances. However, these reconstructions cannot be proven from the text or from extra-biblical sources. Second, Paul would not have regarded rabbinic literature as authoritative. Even if he had been exposed to the Jewish literature in question, he would not have simply accepted the interpretive methods or the conclusions. As mentioned above, he corrected Jewish misunderstandings in light of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Third, it is clear from the text that Paul has Genesis in mind throughout the chapter. As will be demonstrated below, the text of Genesis played a crucial role in the development of Paul's argument in 1 Cor 15:44-49. Thus, we conclude that the background for Paul's Adam-Christ analogy is primarily the OT text, filtered through Paul's experience of the risen Christ and influenced by Jewish understandings of the new humanity.

PAUL'S USE OF THE OT IN 1 COR 15:44-49

Having established both the context of the passage and the background of Paul's Adam/Christ theology, we now turn to examining the particular uses of the OT in 1 Cor 15:44-49. This section will first identify and analyze Paul's uses of the OT within the passage.

Chart 1: The Uses of the OT in 1 Cor 15:44-49

NT Verse	OT Verse	Type	Text
1 Cor 15:45	Gen 2:7	Quote	LXX
1 Cor 15:45b	Ezek 37	Possible Allusion	LXX
1 Cor 15:47	Gen 2:7	Allusion	LXX
1 Cor 15:49	Gen 1:27-28; Gen 5:3	Allusion	LXX

In this passage, there is a heavy concentration of references to the book of Genesis. This is somewhat surprising given the fact that the main theme of the chapter is the resurrection of the body, which is an eschatological event. Paul makes his argument about the end by appealing to the beginning. Understanding the book of Genesis as the background of the passage and Paul's exegesis of Genesis as the content of the passage should therefore control one's interpretation of the difficult phrases. What was true of the context as noted above, namely that Gen 1-3 is the subtext of the chapter is also true of this particular paragraph.

The Use of the OT in 1 Cor 15:45

Having established that the OT is the background for 1 Cor 15:44-49, we can now begin to examine Paul's particular use of these texts. We start by analyzing the text of Paul's quotation of Gen 2:7 in 1 Cor 15:45. The textual differences can be pictured as follows:²⁰

Chart 2: The Text of Gen 2:7 and 1 Cor 15:45

1 Cor 15:45	Ἐγένετο	ὁ πρῶτος ὁ ἔσχατος	ἄνθρωπος	Ἀδὰμ Ἀδὰμ	εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν, εἰς πνεῦμα ζωοποιοῦν.
Gen 2:7	καὶ	ἔγένετο	ὁ ἄνθρωπος		εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν.
1 Cor 15:45	became	the first the last	man	Adam Adam	a living soul, a life-giving spirit
Gen 2:7	and	became	the man		a living soul

The chart serves to highlight the differences between the original text of Genesis and Paul's quotation. Four differences should be noticed. First, the καὶ at the beginning of the original

²⁰ Taken from Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 117.

sentence is omitted. This is “typically Pauline” and is only to make the sentence fit the context.²¹ Second, Paul added the word “first” (ὁ πρῶτος) in the first line before the word “man.” While the addition of this word does not alter the meaning of the original (Adam was indeed the first created man), it is not found in any of the Greek or Hebrew text traditions.²² Here, “first” is intended to correspond to “last” (ὁ ἔσχατος) in the second line of the verse. In other words, the addition of this word seems only to function to fit Paul’s purposes in citation and in making his argument in the following verses.

Third, Paul added the word “Adam” after the word man. At first glance, this addition may seem to simply be necessary in order to make the verse flow in light of the addition of “first.” However, Stanley believes that these two additions originate from differing sources. He notes that no LXX manuscripts contain the word “Adam” in Gen 2:7. However, texts from Theodotion and Symmachus both add ὁ Ἀδὰμ ἄνθρωπος to the Genesis text.²³ Stanley’s point here is that the addition of Adam to the text could either originate from an earlier text tradition or from earlier exegetical traditions and therefore cannot be absolutely attributed to Paul. Ciampa and Rosner note that the addition of “Adam” in Theodotion, Symmachus, and Paul likely result from the ambiguous nature of the Hebrew term אָדָם, which can refer to humans in general or more specifically to the proper name of the first created man. However, they clarify by writing, “the man who is referred to in the text is later called Adam so that the dual rendering of Paul’s gloss serves as a simple reminder of the identity of that original man in Genesis 2:7.”²⁴ Whether or not

²¹ Christopher D. Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture: Citation Technique in the Pauline Epistles and Contemporary Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 208.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 819.

the addition of Adam to the text is original to Paul or not, two points are clear. First, the addition does not alter the original meaning of Gen 2:7. Second, regardless of the origin, the addition of the term adds to the contrast of the verse, which is the main point of this verse and those following.

Fourth, Paul added a second line to the quotation that is completely absent from the original text. He writes, “the last Adam became a life-giving spirit” (ὁ ἔσχατος Ἀδὰμ εἰς πνεῦμα ζωοποιοῦν). This addition to the original Genesis text has proved to be one of the most difficult phrases to interpret. Scholars have proposed several ways in which this difficult phrase should be understood.²⁵ Though there have been other understandings in the history of interpretation, there are two main lines of interpretation among contemporary scholars.²⁶ First, some scholars believe that the reference to πνεῦμα in v. 45 refers to the Holy Spirit. James D. G. Dunn is perhaps the foremost proponent of this view in recent scholarship.²⁷ He points out that in other texts, the language of life-giving is applied to the work of the Holy Spirit.²⁸ Dunn believes that Paul’s purpose in this verse is to comment on the relationship between Christ and the Holy Spirit in light of Christ’s resurrection. For Dunn, the primary emphasis here is the believer’s experience of the Holy Spirit via the risen Christ (or Christ through the Spirit). He writes, “Paul identifies the risen Jesus with this life-giving Spirit; Jesus himself is the source of these experiences of the

²⁵ The focus of this article is the use of the OT in this passage. Therefore, a complete examination of this phrase is beyond the scope of the present study. In what follows, I intend only to give a brief summary of current understandings of the phrase as it relates to the present discussion.

²⁶ Stanley notes that some scholars since Calvin have argued that Paul considered the second half of the verse to be a part of the citation. This view does not hold much sway today. See Stanley, 209, n. 99.

²⁷ For Dunn’s view on 1 Cor 15:45, see the following works: *Christology in the Making* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 107ff, 127, 143ff; *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); and “1 Corinthians 15:45.”

²⁸ Dunn, “1 Corinthians 15:45,” 132. He mentions John 6:63 and 2 Cor 3:6 as examples.

Spirit, or to put in the other way, the experience of the life-giving Spirit is experience of the risen Jesus.²⁹ Thus, the identification of Christ with the Spirit results in a christocentric experience of the Holy Spirit.

Dunn here seems to be equating Christ with the Holy Spirit. Clarifying this point, he writes, “Paul identifies the exalted Jesus with the Spirit...in the believer’s experience there is *no* distinction between Christ and the Spirit.”³⁰ For Dunn, the emphasis is on the experience of the believer. Thus, he is not arguing for an ontological equation of Christ and the Spirit. Rather, he is arguing for a functional and existential equation. In another place, he writes, “Christ is experienced in and through, even *as* the life-giving Spirit, just as the Spirit experienced other than as the Spirit of Christ is for Paul not the Spirit of God.”³¹ Thus, in the life of the believer, Christ, the Last Adam, as the life-giving Spirit means that Christ is experienced in and through the Holy Spirit.

Richard Gaffin agrees that the Holy Spirit is in view in this phrase, but disagrees with Dunn on the details. He gives two reasons for interpreting πνεῦμα ζωοποιοῦν as a reference to the Holy Spirit.³² First, the term πνεῦμα is intimately connected with the term πνευματικόν in the surrounding verses. The term πνευματικόν undoubtedly refers to a body that is controlled or animated by the Holy Spirit in distinction from the ψυχικόν body, which is animated by that which is common to all people and devoid of the Spirit. Thus, Gaffin concludes that “As the adjective πνευματικόν in vv. 44 and 46 plainly refers to the activity of the Holy Spirit, so its

²⁹ Ibid., 132-133.

³⁰ Ibid., 139.

³¹ Dunn, *Paul*, 264.

³² Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., “‘Life-Giving Spirit’: Probing the Center of Paul’s Pneumatology,” *JETS* 41.4 (Dec 1998), 573-589, 577.

correlative noun πνεῦμα in v. 45 refers to the person of the Holy Spirit.”³³ Thus, the semantic relationship between these words leads to the interpretation of πνεῦμα ζωοποιῶν as a reference to the Holy Spirit.

Second, Gaffin agrees with Dunn that Paul uses the term “life-giving” elsewhere as referring to the work of the Holy Spirit. A primary example is 2 Cor 3:6, where Paul writes “The Spirit gives life” (τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα ζωοποιεῖ). For Gaffin, it is beyond dispute that the term in 2 Cor 3:6 refers to the Holy Spirit and therefore should likewise be understood in 1 Cor 15:45.

Gaffin differs from Dunn in that he denies that Paul here is equating Christ and the Holy Spirit. For Gaffin, one must bear in mind Paul’s Trinitarianism in order to rightly understand this text. That is, Paul’s Trinitarian view of God is not the point of this text. Rather, it is the background for understanding the text. The focus on this text is on the humanity of Christ and the results of his resurrection. Gaffin holds that Paul is here showing that a real change occurred in Christ by virtue of his resurrection. Specifically, Gaffin highlights the resulting relationship between Christ and the Spirit. He writes,

In context two closely related aspects are in view: (1) Christ’s own climactic transformation by the Spirit (he is the first to receive a “spiritual body”), and (2) along with that transformation his unique and unprecedented reception of the Spirit. The result is an intimacy, a bond between them that surpasses what previously existed. The result in fact is a new and permanent equation or oneness that is appropriately captured by saying that Christ has become the Spirit.³⁴

Thus, for Gaffin, the issue is a new intimacy between Christ and the Spirit rather than an identification of Christ as the Spirit.

In opposition to this view, other scholars have denied that the phrase refers to the Holy Spirit and have found interpretive clues from the OT for understanding Paul’s meaning. Two

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 582.

primary texts give rise to this understanding. First, Gordon Fee notes that although the words of 1 Cor 15:45b are not found anywhere in the LXX, there are verbal links to the first part of Gen 2:7.³⁵ It is obvious that Paul only quotes the last part of Gen 2:7 in 1 Cor 15:45a. Fee argues that the phrase “life-giving spirit” reflects the content of Gen 2:7a. There, the first man receives the “breath of life” (πνοήν ζωής). The two terms have an obvious semantic relationship.

Second, scholars point out that the phrase “life-giving spirit” does indeed come from Gen 2:7, but by way of Ezek 37.³⁶ That is, Paul read Gen 2:7 in relation to Ezek 37. Thus understood, Ezek 37 contains intertextual links with Gen 2:7 and it is in light of these links that Paul refers to Christ as a life-giving spirit. In Gen 2:7, God breathed the breath of life into the man he had made and only then did the man become a living being. In Ezek 37, the term “breath” (or spirit – same word in Hebrew) is repeated in vv. 6, 9, 10, 14. Only when God puts breath in his people do they become living. “Ezekiel 37 describes a ‘life-giving spirit’ in the context of resurrection of the dead, or the restoration of Israel described as a resurrection of the dead.”³⁷ In both Ezek 37 and 1 Cor 15, giving life means raising the dead.³⁸

Understood in this way, life-giving spirit is not a reference to the Holy Spirit but to Jesus in his resurrected and glorified state. Dunn is surely correct in saying that Paul knew this truth about Christ through both his study of the OT and personal experience, but he is wrong in attributing this to his experience of the Holy Spirit. Rather, the experience that clarified Jesus’ role a life giver was his Damascus Road experience to which he refers in 1 Cor 15:8.³⁹ Thus,

³⁵ Fee, *First Epistle*, 789.

³⁶ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 820.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Garland, 735.

³⁹ Wright, *Climax*, 34. So also Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 820.

Jesus is a life-giving spirit in that he is the “firstfruits” of all who will be raised. That is, because Jesus was raised from the dead, so all those who follow after him will be raised. “In his resurrection whereby he assumed his ‘supernatural body,’ he also became a giver of life to all who will ever follow after.”⁴⁰ The reference to spirit (πνεῦμα), therefore, points back to the two types of bodies in v. 44 by pointing out that Jesus is the first to receive this glorified body rather than identifying Christ with the Holy Spirit.

Following this reasoning, it becomes clear that Paul intended to communicate that Adam and Christ represent two “modes of existence.”⁴¹ The first Adam had a ψυχικόν body and the last Adam a πνευματικόν body. This second line of interpretation seems most likely in the context of 1 Cor 15. As Peter Jones points out, it would be strange if Paul here was referring to the Holy Spirit as it would amount to a sudden change of subject. He writes, “Rather, by the term ‘the last Adam,’ Paul is describing the nature of the new eschatological *humanity*, of which Christ is the prototype and firstfruits (1 Cor 15:22).”⁴²

Drawing all this together, it becomes clear that Paul is using the text of Gen 2:7 in a typological manner to show the superiority of Christ over Adam and the superiority of the resurrection body over the present body. That is, Paul here is giving a typological understanding of Gen 2:7 and applying it to the resurrected Christ. As Leonhard Goppelt put it, “This [Paul’s use of Gen 2:7] is not an inference that Paul makes, but something he perceives to be a

⁴⁰ Fee, *First Epistle*, 789.

⁴¹ Peter Jones, “Paul Confronts Paganism in the Church: A Case Study of 1 Corinthians 15:45,” *JETS* 49.4 (Dec 2006): 713-737, 717.

⁴² *Ibid.*

typological fulfillment with respect to Christ.”⁴³ Paul cites Scripture here in order to bolster his argument concerning the two types of bodies and to connect what he has already said about Adam and Christ in vv. 21-22.⁴⁴ The typology was already established in those verses and is revisited in v. 45. Here, Adam was created and given life. As the first Adam, he represented all those who would come after him. As the anti-type, Christ surpasses Adam in that he is a life-giving spirit. He also represents all those who would come after him. “For Paul, Adam is not simply an illustrative figure. He views Adam through Christ as a true type in redemptive history, as a prophetic personality placed in Scripture by God.”⁴⁵ Thus, both Adam and Christ represent those under their headship.

However, it should be kept in mind that the focus here is eschatological. As those who follow Adam have a body like his, so those who follow Christ will have a body like his resurrected and ascended body. Further, obtaining the πνευματικόν body comes only through resurrection, just as Christ obtained his glorified body through resurrection and *became* a life-giving spirit.⁴⁶ Christ’s new body is the pattern for the resurrection bodies that believers will receive at his return. Fee writes, “just as Adam was the representative man for all who bear a *psychikon* body, so Christ in his resurrection became the representative Man for all who will bear

⁴³ Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New* (trans. Donald H. Madvig; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 134

⁴⁴ Fee, *First Epistle*, 789.

⁴⁵ Goppelt, 130. So also Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (trans. John Richard de Witt; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 543.

⁴⁶ The second half of 1 Cor 15:45 is dependent upon the verb ἐγένετο from the first half of the verse. Thus the translation “became a life-giving spirit.” There is some scholarly discussion concerning the point at which Christ became a life-giving spirit, but most agree that this occurred at his resurrection or ascension. See Wright, *Climax*, 33.

the *pneumatikon* body.⁴⁷ Paul thus sees Christ's resurrection as the inauguration of the new creation.⁴⁸

Calvin summarized clearly the soteriological-eschatological import of this verse:

All men were brought into being in the first man, because God had bestowed on him whatever He was intending to give to all, so that the circumstances of the whole human race were determined by the person of that one man. By his fall he brought ruin on himself and those belonging to him, because he dragged them all with him into disaster at the same time. Christ came to restore our nature from its catastrophic downfall, and raise it up to a better state.⁴⁹

By virtue of his death and resurrection, Christ grants life to those who follow him. Paul understands this in relation to Adam, who failed to fulfill the task to which God called him. On the other hand, Christ has succeeded in obedience and now is restoring what Adam lost. Thus, Christ is life-giving in that his resurrection is the ground and source for the resurrection of believers. He is spirit in that he is the first to receive the *πνευματικὸν* body.

The Use of the OT in 1 Cor 15:47

The Adam-Christ typology does not end with 1 Cor 15:45. It continues throughout the rest of the paragraph, particularly in vv. 47 and 49. Verse 47 alludes to the same OT verse that was quoted in v. 45. In v. 46, Paul affirmed that the *ψυχικὸν* body, which is received from the first Adam, comes first. The *πνευματικὸν* body, which will be received at the return of Christ and by virtue of his own resurrection, comes second. Paul here simply acknowledges the redemptive-historical progression of the Bible.

⁴⁷ Fee, *First Epistle*, 791.

⁴⁸ Wright, *Resurrection*, 355.

⁴⁹ John Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* (trans. John W. Fraser; ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans and Carlisle: Paternoster, 1960), 339.

In v. 47, Paul again refers back to Gen 2:7, this time in order to continue the typology with an eschatological focus. Here, Adam is said to be “of the dust of the earth” (ἐκ γῆς χοϊκός) while Christ is “of heaven” (ἐξ οὐρανοῦ). Some have mistakenly believed that this verse comments on the origins of Adam and Christ. However, this understanding does not fit with the overall teaching of the text. Rather, as Fee points out, these descriptions communicate the same meaning as ψυχικόν and πνευματικὸν from the preceding verses.⁵⁰ Thus, v. 47 shows that the first man had a ψυχικόν body and was marked by earthly things while the second man has a πνευματικὸν body as is marked by the heavenly. Further, being of the dust of the earth may communicate weakness and decay while being “of heaven” would communicate permanence. As Ridderbos notes, this “indicates that as the second Adam and as the Inaugurator of the new life of the resurrection Christ lives from the power of the heavenly, divine Spirit.”⁵¹ Adam’s body (and ours) is fitted for earth, not for heaven. In the resurrection, believers will receive a heavenly body like Christ’s, which will be fit for life in heaven, living from the power of the Spirit.

Paul has again used Gen 2:7 in a typological manner in order to demonstrate the superiority of Christ over Adam. Christ is the one who brings life, heavenly life to those who follow him. The focus is eschatological, pointing forward to the return of Christ. The Corinthian believers, therefore, must look forward to the future reception of a new, glorified body that will be like Christ’s, the heavenly man.

Paul again points beyond the destiny of man to the theme of new creation. As Wright points out, “Paul draws into the discussion the most fundamental aspect of creation, heaven and earth, as in Genesis 1:1, showing how the new creation represents, at last, the Jewish dream of the kingdom, embodied in the new humanity that, as in Philippians 3:20-21, comes ‘from

⁵⁰ Fee, *First Epistle*, 792.

⁵¹ Ridderbos, *Paul*, 544.

heaven.”⁵² Thus, Christ’s resurrection and ascension have inaugurated the new creation and fulfills the roles which Adam (and Israel) failed to fulfill. He is the new humanity that restores what was broken in the fall.

The Use of the OT in 1 Cor 15:49

Verse 49 continues the typology and again refers to the text of Genesis. In this verse, Paul alludes to both Gen 1:26-27 and Gen 5:3. These verses focus on the image of God in man. Paul’s discussion in vv. 48-49 moves from a comparison between Adam and Christ to a comparison between those who come after Adam and those who come after Christ. Embedded in this discussion is some important teaching on the image of God and the nature of salvation.

In v. 48 Paul began to move beyond the Adam-Christ typology to application to the Corinthian believers. He made clear that those who follow the man of dust would be like him and those who follow the man of heaven would also be like him. This makes clear the representative nature of both Adam and Christ that has been implicit throughout the passage. Adam represented all people when he sinned in the garden. Christ also represents his people in his obedience. Thus, the fate of Adam and Christ has direct implications upon those whom they represent.

Verse 49 applies this to the concept of the image of God. As discussed above, in the OT context, Gen 1:26-27 affirms that all people are created in the image of God. This means that humans are God’s unique, special creation and are set apart from all other created beings. It is also clear that although humans continue to bear the image of God after the fall, the image has

⁵² Wright, *Resurrection*, 313.

been seriously damaged.⁵³ Gen 5:3 affirmed that Adam passed on the (damaged) image of God to Seth. Thus, all who have come after Adam have received his image.

With this context in mind, Paul says that “Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.” There are several points to be made about this text. First, Paul links identification with Christ with the restoration of the image of God in man. In other places, Paul teaches that Christ is the perfect image of God.⁵⁴ Where Adam sinned and failed to fulfill his role as one created in the image of God, Christ perfectly represents the image of God. Thus, those who are in Christ are being remade in the image of Christ, who is the image of God. As Ciampa and Rosner note, “God’s plan of redemption entails, among other things, restoring the perfect reflection of his image in his people, now by conforming them to the image of his Son, Jesus Christ (Rom 8:29).”⁵⁵ Christ restores the perfect image of God in the new humanity who are destined to dwell in the new creation.

Second, the allusion to Gen 5:3 shows that just as Adam passed on his image to his son and all those who followed after him, so Christ is passing on his image to all those who come after him. This fits within the context of the two types of bodies that Paul has been developing throughout the passage. The image of Adam is the ψυχικόν body, the earthly, weak, and corruptible. The image of Christ is the perfect image of God that perfectly displays the glory of God, fulfilling the original intention of the image. The point is clear – “We spend these lives in bodies that reflect Adam’s state after the fall; we will spend the rest of eternity in bodies that

⁵³ Calvin writes, “Even though we grant that God’s image was not totally annihilated and destroyed in him [Adam], yet it was so corrupted that whatever remains is frightful deformity.” *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J. T. McNeill, trans. and indexed F. L. Battles, Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 1:189,190 (L.xv.4).

⁵⁴ 2 Cor 4:4 and Col 1:15.

⁵⁵ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 825.

reflect Christ's state after his resurrection from the dead."⁵⁶ Thus, by his resurrection and his status as the life-giving spirit, Christ is able to pass on his image to believers who are being transformed "in the image of its Creator" (Col 3:10).

Third, there is some disagreement as to whether the verb in the v. 49b should be read as a future "we shall bear" or as a subjunctive "let us bear."⁵⁷ Fee is probably correct in noting that the subjunctive fits within the overall teaching of 1 Corinthians. In light of all that has been discussed in the chapter, Paul is calling the Corinthian believers to live accordingly. They are being remade in the image of Christ should therefore strive to live like Christ lived. Fully bearing the image of Christ will not be accomplished until glorification. However, the Corinthians, as in other parts of the letter, are called to live in light of their union with Christ.⁵⁸ Therefore, the use of the OT here has implications for sanctification.

CONCLUSION

This study has sought to demonstrate that Paul's use of the OT in 1 Cor 15:44-49 is essential to his argument in the entire chapter. Rather than simply using the OT to illustrate a point that he has already made, Paul bases his argument upon his reading of the OT text. The resulting text has enormous theological implications.

First, Paul's repeated references to the book of Genesis show that he has a new creation theme in mind as he discusses the resurrection of Christ and the future resurrection of His people. Thus understood, Paul is arguing that the resurrection of the dead is essential to God's plan of

⁵⁶ Ibid., 824.

⁵⁷ Fee, *First Epistle*, 794-795.

⁵⁸ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet: Studies in the Role of the Heavenly Dimension in Paul's Thought with Special Reference to His Eschatology* (SNTSMS; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 51.

redemption. He makes this clear in the first part of chapter 15 where he shows that without the resurrection, there is no gospel. In the storyline of the Bible, the resurrection of Christ has inaugurated the restoration of all things, which will be consummated upon his parousia. Paul strikingly refers to the beginning of the story in order to tell the end of the story.

Second, while not the primary theme of the passage, there are some Christological implications to Paul's use of the OT, particularly in v. 45. Contra Dunn, Paul is in no way equating Christ with the Holy Spirit. However, in saying that Christ is a life-giving spirit, Paul is assigning actions to Christ that are reserved only for Yahweh in the OT. More specifically, Paul alludes to Ezek 37 where Yahweh alone is able to give life to dry bones. Christ is identified with Yahweh, thus alluding to his divinity. On the other hand, Paul's identification of Christ as the Last Adam clearly points to his humanity. While not properly identified as a "Christological passage," 1 Cor 15:44-49 alludes to important Christological affirmations.

Third, Paul's use of the OT in this passage links together soteriological, anthropological, and eschatological concerns. Fallen man is being remade in the image of Christ, who is the image of God. The completion of this recreation will take place at the return of Christ, which will trigger the resurrection of the body. Thus, Paul demonstrates the final destiny of those who follow Christ. Believers will receive eternal life from the last Adam, who is a life-giving spirit and will be restored to the status of the perfect image of God. Paul answered the Corinthian concerns about the resurrection by upholding Christ as the pattern of the new humanity and by pointing to Christ in his resurrection as the goal of what God is doing in redemptive history.