

Let’s keep in mind the context of the discussion. Paul is answering, *How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?*

Verse 46—

Natural and afterward...spiritual. What you see right now is not what will be later.

Verses 47-49—

These words sound more complicated than they are. **Earthy**, we come from dust, and we are not yet **heavenly**. The **Lord is heavenly**. One day we are **earthy**, the next day we will be **heavenly**. Just because we are human now doesn’t mean we won’t have a resurrected future body that will be in the image of Christ.

Verse 50—

Kingdom of God. There is disagreement over this phrase, “inherit the Kingdom of God.” If we take the phrase in its plain sense, we know that we as Christians don’t inherit, we receive a gift. The nation of Israel receives an inheritance. In one sense an inheritance is a legal right to something, but in another sense that right has to be given to the recipient, as a gift. Paul could be saying, “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God because it is not an inheritance—it’s a gift. Just as a dead corrupted body doesn’t inherit an incorruptible body. Something has to be done to it by an outside force.

What we know: 1) The kingdom of heaven is future. This is the kingdom where Jesus Christ reigns forever and ever (Revelation 11:15). We are not in that kingdom now. The Kingdom is future and it is where the King is. Therefore, it cannot be on earth at this time. Currently, the future King (Jesus Christ) is in heaven, seated at the right hand of the Father (Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3, etc.). He is awaiting the call from the Father to come down to earth to put all enemies under his feet.

Is the Kingdom of Heaven different from the Kingdom of God? Some say they are the same, others propose the two should be understood apart from one another. For example, (Chart: E.W. Bullinger, The Companion Bible)

| | The Kingdom of Heaven (Theocratic) | The Kingdom of God (Universal) |
|----|--|--|
| 1. | Has Messiah for its King; | 1. Has <i>God</i> for its Ruler; |
| 2. | It is <i>from heaven</i> ; and <i>under the heavens upon the earth</i> ; | 2. It is <i>in heaven, over the earth</i> ; |
| 3. | It is <i>limited</i> in its scope; | 3. It is <i>unlimited</i> in its scope; |
| 4. | It is <i>political</i> in its sphere; | 4. It is <i>moral and spiritual</i> in its sphere; |
| 5. | It is <i>Jewish and exclusive</i> in its character; | 5. It is <i>inclusive</i> in its character (embracing the natural and spiritual seeds of Abraham, “ <i>the heavenly calling</i> ,” and the “ <i>Church</i> ” of the Mystery). Hence, |
| 6. | It is <i>national</i> in aspect; | 6. It is <i>universal</i> in aspect; |
| 7. | It is the <i>special subject</i> of O.T <i>prophecy</i> ; | 7. It is (in its <i>wider</i> aspect) the subject of <i>New Testament revelation</i> ; |
| 8. | And it is dispensational in its duration. | 8. And will be <i>eternal</i> in its duration; |

There are several kingdom phrases used in the N.T. “The Kingdom of Heaven,” “The Kingdom of God,” “The Kingdom of the Father,” “The Kingdom of the Son of man,” “The Kingdom of His dear Son,” “The Everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,” “The Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.” Are these all the same? It would be good to do a complete study to find out.

What we conclude makes a difference in how we interpret this statement by Paul and the following verses. **Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.**

Is Paul Describing the Rapture in the Following Verses?

Verses 51-54—

Behold I show you a mystery. The Greek word **mystery** is *musterion* and it means a hidden thing, or a secret. It is something never revealed before. Is Paul showing this mystery for the first time ever? Or, does he mean “I am showing you Corinthians a mystery.” Did he reveal it to another church? Like the Thessalonians? But it had never been revealed to the Corinthians?

What is the mystery? **We shall not all sleep.** This word can be translated “be dead.” This mystery applies to “**all**” who are not dead, and “**all**” who are. **All be changed**--All dead and all living will be changed.

How will the change take place? **In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.** Instantaneously, at any given moment. **At the last trump.** The change will take place when a last trumpet sounds. Is this a random sounding of a trumpet? Or, is it the last trumpet in Revelation 11:15? Or, is it *the trump of God* in 1st Thessalonians 4:16? The passage does not tell us, so we can only speculate—choose your trumpet.

What will happen? **The dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall all be changed.**

Is this the Rapture of the Church? Or, is it another resurrection? If you say it is the Rapture, then you have to do something with the idea of the inheritance as we have already addressed.

Recognizing there is a problem, I lean toward this being a Rapture passage (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17), for the following reasons:

1. Paul uses the pronoun “All.” I would take **all** to mean **all** those Paul is talking to, including himself. Paul was saved by grace through faith, so he would certainly be counted in the **all**, and hence the Rapture.
2. There is a trumpet sounding here in verse 52 and there is a trumpet sounding in 1 Thessalonians 4:16. The 1st Thessalonians passage does not say “the last” trumpet...
3. The dead are raised in 1st Corinthians, as they are in 1st Thessalonians (the dead in Christ).
4. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians about the Rapture in AD 54. Corinthians was written about AD 59. Although it is difficult to believe it would still be a mystery, even in Corinth 5 years later, it’s also difficult to believe Paul only spoke of the Rapture one time in all of his 13 letters.

The corruptible must put on incorruption. At this resurrection there will be no more corrupt body of flesh and blood. Whatever keeps us alive, it will not be blood—Perhaps the breath of life of the Spirit of God?

Verse 55,56—

And death shall be no more! **Death is swallowed up in victory: O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?**

Verse 57—

We need further study in this passage, but one thing is for certain, we can give **thanks to God**, because he has given **us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ**. We have victory because we have everlasting life.

Verse 58—

What should this cause us to live like? **Steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord...your labor is not in vain!**