

1 Corinthians 15:50

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

Analysis

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (τοῦτο δέ φημι, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα βασιλείαν θεοῦ κληρονομῆσαι οὐ δύναται)—The phrase *sarx kai haima* (σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα, "flesh and blood") is Hebraic idiom for mortal human nature (Matthew 16:17, Galatians 1:16, Ephesians 6:12). Paul doesn't disparage embodiment but indicates present mortal bodies are unsuited for eternal kingdom. The verb *klēronomēsai* (κληρονομῆσαι, "to inherit") indicates receiving promised inheritance—eternal life in God's kingdom.

Neither doth corruption inherit incorruption (οὐδὲ ἡ φθορὰ τὴν ἀφθαρσίαν κληρονομεῖ)—*Phthora* (φθορά, "corruption, decay, perishability") cannot inherit *aphtharsia* (ἀφθαρσία, "incorruption, imperishability"). This is logical impossibility—the corruptible cannot possess the incorruptible. Therefore transformation is necessary (v. 51-52). Resurrection doesn't mean disembodied souls but transformed bodies—physicality perfected, not negated.

Historical Context

This verse refutes both Gnosticism (which denied bodily resurrection) and crude materialism (which expected mere resuscitated corpses). Paul affirms embodiment while insisting on transformation. The kingdom of God is physical new creation (Isaiah 65:17, Revelation 21:1), requiring physical bodies—but glorified bodies suited to that realm.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does 'flesh and blood cannot inherit' require transformation rather than disembodiment?
2. What aspects of present mortal existence are incompatible with eternal kingdom life?
3. How does this verse balance continuity (we will have bodies) with discontinuity (they must be transformed)?

Interlinear Text

Τοῦτο δέ φημι ἀδελφοί ὅτι σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα βασιλείαν
this Now I say brethren that flesh and blood the kingdom
G5124 G1161 G5346 G80 G3754 G4561 G2532 G129 G932

θεοῦ κληρονομεῖ οὐ δύνανται οὐδὲ ἡ φθορὰ τὴν
of God doth cannot G1410 neither G3588 corruption G3588
G2316 G2816 G3756 G3761 G5356

ἀφθαρσίαν κληρονομεῖ
incorruption doth
G861 G2816

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 16:17 (Blood): And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

Ephesians 4:17 (Parallel theme): This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,

Galatians 5:16 (Parallel theme): This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

1 Corinthians 6:13 (References God): Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.

2 Corinthians 5:1 (References God): For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Galatians 3:17 (References God): And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.
