

# Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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## If a Man Die, Shall he Live Again?

*For there is hope of a tree, If it be cut down, that it will sprout again, And that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, And the stock thereof die in the ground; Yet through the scent of water it will bud, And bring forth boughs like a plant. But man dieth, and wasteth away: Yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? As the waters fail from the sea, And the flood decayeth and drieth up: So man lieth down, and riseth not: Till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, Nor be raised out of their sleep. O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, That thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, That thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, Till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: Thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands. For now thou numberest my steps: Dost thou not watch over my sin? My transgression is sealed up in a bag, And thou sewest up mine iniquity. (Job 14:7–17, KJV 1900)*

Students of Bible history generally believe that the Book of Job is older than Moses' writings (ca 1500 BC). There are no clear historical references in the book to reveal a definitive clue as to the book's origin or date. However, the mention of Job in other Scriptures (Ezekiel 14:14, 20; James 5:10-11) that associate him with other Old Testament patriarchs identifies Job as a man, not as an imaginary figure or the book as an allegory. We should read Job as the life story of a godly and unique man who faced incredible trials and, for the most part, endured them with grace. Given that Job himself confesses his repentance (Job 42:6), we should avoid trying to make him "Bigger than life." A man doesn't repent of righteousness, but of sin.

As we explore the Old Testament view of death and resurrection, in this case Job, particularly resurrection, we may be consulting the oldest book in the Bible in terms of its date of writing. Without question, it dates among the oldest. Therefore, if we find evidence in Job of a firm belief in life after death and in a bodily resurrection, we may reasonably conclude that these beliefs were central to Old Testament faith, faith, after all, in the same God who anchors our faith in the New Testament era.

While Job reasons through several points to the question, he obviously aims at the question from the beginning. Not only does Job ask the question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" but he also answers his own question. We have much rich truth to explore in this passage.

*For there is hope of a tree, If it be cut down, that it will sprout again, And that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, And the stock thereof die in the ground; Yet through the scent of water it will bud, And bring forth boughs like a plant.* A deciduous tree becomes dormant during the winter. As the tree slips from the warm days of summer into chilling fall and winter, the leaves slowly turn from

deep green to brown and fall off the branches. What was once a beautiful green cluster of life and color for all its appearance is now a cluster of sticks, empty branches that give little or no appearance of life. However cold and severe the winter, as spring approaches, and the weather begins to warm up again, you will begin to notice new buds of green on the tree's branches. The tree appears to come back to life and again burst into its beautiful, vibrant green coat. Job introduces us to this very normal cycle of the tree, but his objective is far greater than a tree.

Job's use of the tree analogy in this setting should instruct us. The tree that appears to thrive during the summer becomes dormant during the winter, but next spring it shall bud and return to its vibrant life cycle. Job is not teaching us about trees and seasons. He is dealing with this major question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" His point is not an allegory, so we need not chase every detail of tree biology. The analogy addresses one central issue, the answer to the question. And Job's use of the tree analogy indeed answers the question. Yes, a man shall live again.

*But man dieth, and wasteth away: Yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?* We may gather that the life of the tree retreats into the roots for winter, but can the cycle of the tree help us at all understand our greater question about ourselves? Apparently Job believes that it can. For the moment, we see man wasting away through age, disease, or injury. Eventually, his body wears out and gives up. Man dies, and, indeed, where is he? We see briefly the form of the body in which man lived, but he no longer lives in that body. Where is he? This question adds yet more truth to our study. "Where is he?" If he is somewhere, he didn't cease to exist at death, did he? He no longer lives in the physical body that he inhabited during his life. So where is he?

*So man lieth down, and riseth not: Till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, Nor be raised out of their sleep.* Man who dies and is buried doesn't come back to life in the spring season of the year. Yet Job draws some very distinct points regarding man's continuing existence after and beyond his physical death.

Notice that Job does not state that man dies and never rises. He doesn't rise "Till the heavens be no more..." Clearer words could not be framed to describe the New Testament doctrine of the end of time and the Lord's Second Coming, His final, victorious coming to raise the dead. (John 5:28-29; 2 Peter 3:10-14) Job's words seem focused and clear in his perception, his obvious and very deep belief, that man who dies shall live again at that long-future and epochal day. We shall learn about the temporary state between death and Second Coming from other passages, but Job will not leave us in doubt. Though a man dies, he shall be raised. He shall live again. When should we expect this change to occur? "Till the heavens be no more." Peter (2 Peter 3) unpacks the details of the cosmic meltdown of the material universe that shall occur at the Second Coming. What we read from Peter fully harmonizes with what we read here from Job.

*O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, That thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, That thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me!* Despite not expecting the body to arise in the spring, Job clearly expects it to arise in a true and very literal resurrection, "...until thy wrath be past...remember me." Before He created the material universe, God devised the means by which He would resolve His wrath in such a specific way that He would be wholly at peace with those for whom He answered that righteous indignation against their sins. (Matthew 1:21; no Scripture ever points us in any other direction for salvation from the guilt and alienation from God that our sins deserve)

*If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, Till my change come.* Not only does Job ask the question, but he answers it, "...Till my change come." These are far from random comments. Job has asked the question of the ages. His next thought will expand the point and answer that question. Despite the vivid reality of death, Job fully expected to enter death only temporarily. He rejoiced in hope of a coming "**change**." We begin to see his analogy as he intended to apply it to the question, "...there is hope of a tree." Based on Ecclesiastes 12:7, Luke 16:19-31, 23:43, Philippians 1:23, and many other passages, life apart from the physical body continues at the death of the body, but the physical body experiences the full reality of death. Job is dealing with that point in our study passage. The spirit or soul was changed in the new birth, so that change is already history. The body that experienced death shall experience "change" at the Second Coming.

Far more to the central point of our topic, Job defines the time of his wait, "Till my change come." He fully expected and looked forward to a change. Till that time, he could only wait, but he would not for a moment forget that this change was indeed coming. The change that Job describes and expected is a personal change, "...my change." It is certain; it shall "...come."

In a far distant age and culture, another Bible writer spoke similar words.

*Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead? (Acts 26:8)*

*But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men. (Acts 24:14-16)*

Whether we read an ancient holy book, no less inspired by the Holy Spirit than Paul's or John's New Testament writings, or a fresh New Testament letter, we discover that God's revelation of His truth is unwavering. God's purpose for His beloved children and His revelation of that purpose to them remains unchanged in its essential content across the centuries. Job rejoiced at the thought of his coming "change." Paul could have joyfully departed to be with Christ, but he remained to edify the Lord's people till his "...change come."

While the form of worship and even of faith's temporal perspective did change from Old to New Testament, God's purpose for His chosen family is eternal and unchangeable. Scripture uses the word "Immutable." We have the advantage of Scripture's record and the resonate testimony of faith regarding Jesus' death and resurrection. This gives us an obvious temporary advantage over those Old Testament saints. (Hebrews 11:39-40) When we study eternal salvation, life after death, or the Second Coming, and our glorious resurrection, we all—Old and New Testament saint—stand on the same foundation stone. And we shall sing the praises of our one-and-the-same crucified, dead, but arisen and victorious Lord alike, regardless when we lived in this world. Jesus saved Abel, David, Job, and Daniel exactly the same way that He saved you and me. Hallelujah! What a Savior!

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Worship service each Sunday  
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.  
Pastor