

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

Volume 32, Number 10

March 8, 2015



How are the Dead Raised Up?

But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. (1 Corinthians 15:35–41, KJV 1900)

When someone asks a question, I often not only listen to the question, but I also try to understand why he asked the question. Did he ask for information? For clarification of his thoughts? Or to use my answer to engage in a debate that he would use to promote his idea? The question that Paul here answers from "some man" reveals unbelief in the resurrection. If we miss that point in the question, we can't possibly miss it in Paul's answer. New Testament writers seldom refer to any one as a fool, but Paul uses the term to address this man and his unbelieving question.

A common belief of our day regarding the resurrection holds that at death God fabricates a "Heavenly" body that our soul inhabits. Does the soul inhabit this fabricated body permanently or only until the Second Coming? Opinions are not clear or consistent among those who believe this idea. I have observed that a number of those who hold this idea wholly reject the idea of a literal resurrection of the body in which we lived during this life. Advocates of the idea will cite the passage before us or a few other passages, and impose a wrested (Twisted out of joint and out of context) interpretation onto it. If we isolated these verses from their context, we might think these people have some ground for their belief. However, when we examine the context, in this case the verses following, we learn that Paul emphasized that the same body that is "Sown" in death is "Raised" in power. Paul's consistent reference to "It" in verses 42-44 utterly rejects the idea of a fabricated body. That same body that is sown and that returns to the earth after death is the body that God shall raise. If you were to examine the full DNA of the body that died and the body that shall be raised, you'd discover that they would be the same, not different. The scientific basis is obviously anachronistic, but it does make the point that Paul makes. Otherwise Paul's use of "It" to refer both to the corrupt body that is sown in death and to the body that is raised incorruptible and in power would be meaningless. Whatever Paul intended by "It" that is sown in death

is the same thing that he intended by the "It" that is raised in power.

With our finite minds, we cannot fully understand how a literal resurrection is possible, but then that same finite mind cannot understand how God could create the universe out of nothing. (Hebrews 11:3) Faith, not human intellect, must work for us to believe either truth. When Jesus refuted the Sadducees who did not believe at all in the resurrection or in life after death, He pointed out that their unbelief was caused by two major flaws in their thinking. They did not know the power of God, and they did not know the Scriptures. I suggest that rejection of a literal bodily resurrection in our time is anchored in the same two factors. No surprise, throughout First Corinthians 15, Paul follows Jesus' method of proving the resurrection by appealing to the power of God and to Scripture. As you read this chapter, take special notice of Paul's references to "according to the scriptures" or "as it is written" or similar words. In our study verses, he reminds us of God's power, so Paul wisely and rightly followed Jesus' example to prove the truth of the resurrection.

Rather than teaching the idea of a fabricated body in these verses, given the contextual emphasis on that same "It" that is sown being the very same "It" that God raises, what do we make of these verses? I suggest that Paul is addressing the same issue that caused both the ancient Sadducees and modern unbelievers in the resurrection to reject it, their ignorance of the power of God and the teaching of Scripture. From a tiny seed that a farmer plants in his field to the sun and the heavenly bodies that God planted in space, all of creation bears witness to the power of God, power quite sufficient to raise the dead and so change that dead body that He raised as to be wholly at home and rejoicing in God for eternity. In assessing the character of those in the Corinthian Church who prompted Paul's intense analysis, A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, observes that these people likely took on an air of prideful acuteness in their unbelieving questions.

However, as Robertson points out, one's personal claim of intelligence does not make one intelligent. Jesus didn't tell the Sadducees that they lacked intelligence, but that they lacked knowledge of the power of God and of the Scriptures. Paul reminds us that God who shall raise the dead is the same God who created the whole material universe. If He can form something out of nothing, He has the power to raise the dead. And if in that creation He can form such incredible miracles of function and harmony, from the miracle of sub-microscopic diversity to massive heavenly bodies separated by "Light years" of distance, why should we question, "How are the dead raised up?" If God created various parts of His creation to manifest different degrees of glory, He shall have no problem raising a body that died in corruption to the glory of incorruption. God didn't create a "Cookie cutter" mass production one among many universe. He created one and only one unique universe that uniquely declares His glory. (Psalm 19:1)

Occasionally professing and well-meaning Christians will abandon Scripture and indulge their minds in fanciful philosophical conjecture. One such venture that I've observed over the years has to do with creation, especially as this creation fell under the curse of sin. Supposedly, prior to creation, God "Imagined" every possible universe that He could create and every possible outcome that He could bring about, and then He chose to create this universe. I've asked for even one Scripture to support this idea of cosmic imagination, but I've never received one. God is not man. He need not imagine endless potentials before choosing one.

*But he is in one mind, and who can turn him?
and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth.
(Job 23:13)*

At its heart, this idea of God imagining multiple universes encroaches on the Biblical truth of God's immutability. I find nothing in Scripture, not a drop of Biblical ink, regarding God imagining multiple universes, but I find an abundance of testimony in Scripture regarding God's immutability. When we examine the opening verse of the Bible, we do not read about God stroking His cosmic beard, pondering what He might do, even imagining each possible option, and then deciding to create this universe instead of another. "In the beginning God..." In this verse, as in all other Biblical passages, God is decisive and immutable. For God to pursue this imaginative concept, we must embrace the idea that God didn't know what He intended to do, and that over time He pondered His options and their outcomes. At the least, the idea reduces God to a rather indecisive being. This is not the image of God that we find revealed in Scripture.

God's natural creation declares His glory. (Psalm 19:1-6) Likewise, His spiritual creation

declares His glory, and shall do so through endless eternity. (Ephesians 3:20-21)

If we accept the teaching of Scripture, God's one and only limitation has to do with His moral character. He cannot lie. (Titus 1:2) He cannot deny Himself. (2 Timothy 2:13) When Paul faced a group that was divided on this question of the resurrection, some believing and some denying, he framed his question on the premise of God's power.

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

During Jesus' public ministry, the proud, self-righteous Pharisees stand out as His most fierce critics. When we move to Acts and see the apostles and early preachers consistently preaching Jesus and the resurrection, the Sadducees join the fierce opposition. The weight and the source of opposition to what these men taught bears convincing evidence to the truth that they proclaimed, the same truth that we should preach today, fully knowing that those who do not believe that truth shall likewise oppose.

A simple final point. Psalm 19:1 reminds us that the natural creation declares God's glory. The glory of which Paul writes in our study passage is no less a reference to the Lord's glory than Psalm 19:1. Sadly, the corruptions of thinking in contemporary ideas about the Second Coming often focus far more on man than on God. You frequently hear or read about ideas that give more glory to man than to God. A popular advocate of this idea a few years ago in a radio sermon cited the passage about the lion lying down with the lamb and asserted that he would have his personal pet lion in heaven. Others in this camp of thought strive to earn jewels to decorate their personal crown of glory in heaven. According to Scripture's record, the redeemed saints in heaven will not promote their personal crown. Quite the opposite, whatever crown they may have shall be cast at the feet of their Lord and Redeemer, and they shall praise Him alone for their redemption.

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.(Revelation 4:10-11)

The idea of earning stars in a personal crown of glory by good works utterly corrupts the Biblical model of obedience out of love for the Lord and devotion to His glory.

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Worship service each Sunday
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.
Pastor