

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

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## A Mystery Revealed that "Must" Occur

*Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. (1 Corinthians 15:50–53, KJV 1900)*

What does Paul intend by "flesh and blood" in this lesson? Folks who deny the resurrection, folks like the Corinthians whom Paul rebuked for their false belief, will cite this passage and interpret "flesh and blood" as a reference to the physical body, denying every point that Paul taught here. However, a review of New Testament appearances of the term will make a different point. When Peter responded to Jesus that He was the Christ, the Son of God, Jesus affirmed the point and Peter's view of Him. Notice Jesus' words to Peter, "...flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee." (Matthew 16:17) Jesus was not referring to a physical human body, but to the human intellect that links to the body. And Paul makes the same point in our study passage. No human being who ever lived shall enter God's presence in eternal glory based on his personal intellect or ability. The governing principle of life in the resurrection, and for eternity, shall be the life of God that we receive through the Lord Jesus Christ in the new birth. But then that life principle shall wholly occupy and dominate our physical glorified body. We shall never again struggle with the conflict of two opposite natures engaged in combat to control our actions. Only the life of God that He gave us through kind grace shall control and direct our conduct in eternity.

*...neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.* Paul reinforces the point. He is not referring to the physical body, but to the nature that we now possess that is associated with that body. Our present corruption cannot gain the incorruption that Paul has affirmed shall be ours in the resurrection. For a body to be raised back to one's former life is a miracle indeed. Consider Jesus raising Lazarus. However, for Him to raise a body and also to transform it so that all of its former "corruption" and related broken and sinful traits are stripped away and replaced by "incorruption" and all that Paul in this chapter associates with the resurrection is the greatest of all miracles. And that, my friends, is what we have to look forward to in glory.

*Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. **The body** sleeps in death till the Second Coming. In John 11, Jesus referred to Lazarus, then dead, as sleeping, but He went to Bethany to awake him out of his*

sleep, to raise Lazarus' body from death. Nothing in Paul's words implies the errant idea of soul-sleep. Jesus' lesson of Lazarus and the rich man emphatically affirm that the soul consciously continues after death.<sup>1</sup> The absence of a body mystifies us, but not God. Having no body in no way interferes with the work of the Holy Spirit or of angels.

The word "changed" was translated from a word that means "To change the form or nature of a thing." Paul uses this word in Galatians 4:20. He desires to see the Galatians in person, hopefully to see that they have repented from their departure so that he may "Change" his voice to them. Paul had only one voice box, but he could use that one voice box to utter words of rebuke and refutation against error, or he could "Change" that voice and speak words of affirmation and encouragement. Some Bible teachers have made the simple point against the modern idea of a new fabricated body at death that Paul didn't say that our body shall be "Exchanged" the one for another, but that this body in which we now live shall be changed. It is indeed the same body, but not in the same form or quality (Lack thereof) as now.

*In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye...* Have you ever heard someone preaching or teaching on

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<sup>1</sup> Some interpret the lesson of Lazarus and the rich man as a parable or as a reference to Jews and Gentiles. In unjustified allegorical style, I have heard men teach, for example, that the rich man's five brothers "Represent" the five books of Moses, the Law. The idea is inherently problematic, for it ignores the rich man himself. There were six siblings in the family, not five, so the reference to the five books of Moses, Genesis-Deuteronomy, has no valid ground in the lesson. We observe that Jesus never constructed His parables on fictional ideas. He built His parables on commonplace events of the day, a farmer tending his vineyard or a shepherd watching his sheep. I believe the lesson reveals a literal truth, not either a parable or an allegory. However, even if the lesson is a parable, it is a parable built on a literal and accepted truth, so the point of life after death is fully affirmed in the lesson.

the Second Coming leave the impression that God's judgment shall linger endlessly on? While Scripture teaches that God shall impose a personal, individual judgment against the wicked at His return, it never suggests that He shall do so in a plodding, prolonged manner. His judgment shall be both individual and instantaneous. Just as He judges the wicked, He shall also raise His beloved children and "Change" their bodies as Paul has described in this chapter. And all of these actions shall unfold in the briefest of moments. We use the word "Atom" to identify the smallest possible particle of matter that can retain the characteristics of the constituent element. If you divide it into any smaller size, you destroy its elemental character. Well, the time necessary for the Lord to raise the dead, glorify His elect (I suggest that we shall exit the grave in that glorified image), and judge the wicked shall be in the briefest of time that is measurable. It doesn't take any extended time for the eye to twinkle, does it? And it shall take God no longer than that to complete the processes that He has purposed for that day.

*...at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.* Ancient cultures sounded trumpets to announce or to observe a major event. The Second Coming and resurrection is a major event for God! It shall culminate the grand and successful climax of His eternal purpose for His elect, along with His long delayed punishment of the wicked. Notice Paul does not indicate that two trumpets shall sound. The resurrection of the elect is the subject of Paul's teaching in this chapter, but nothing in his writing here or elsewhere indicates that he intended to relocate the resurrection and judgment of the wicked to a different time. Paul here refers to one and only one trumpet sounding. In John 5:28-29, Jesus specifically refers to the resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked as occurring in one and only one hour, "**...the hour** is coming in the which...."

What is this monumental event in God's eternal purpose that calls for the sounding of a cosmic trumpet? *...the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.* The Second Coming is not an event for others, but for the Lord's children, "**...we** shall be changed." The sentence structure implies two distinct actions, resurrection and "change." When our bodies are revived and raised, they shall come back incorruptible. However, Scripture teaches that the physical bodies of the elect shall have far more distinctions from their former state than mere incorruption. All of the other changes necessary for our bodies to fully know and rejoice in our God and His grace shall also be immediately effected in our bodies. Incorruption alone might put us, for example, in the Garden of Eden, but not subject to the serpent's subtle deceit. Some aberrant groups teach some variation of this idea as their belief of heaven. Scripture reveals that heaven shall be far more than an ideal physical

place. Scripture's leading indications reveal that heaven's greatest distinction shall be our relationship with God, a spiritual "Place" and state, not merely a physical one. Consider.

*And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. (Revelation 5:9)*

*For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.* I love the certainty of Scripture's important truths. Paul is not teaching the Corinthians a speculative superstition, but a certain truth, "**...must** put on." In verses 42-44, Paul enlarged the list of glorious changes, but he repeats these two. Focus your meditations for a time just on these two words. How many qualities can you recall that are associated with "incorruption"? With "immortality"? And we can only grasp a fraction of the full impact of such words, much less the reality that we shall experience at that glorious event.

*...put on.* Any belief that denies a literal bodily resurrection of our bodies must ignore and contradict these simple words. When we arise in the morning, we "put on" our clothes. We put them on our body. At the Second Coming and our resurrection, our physical bodies shall be raised, newly and gloriously clothed with incorruption and immortality. If you ignore a literal resurrection and leave the body in the grave, you have nothing on which to "put" incorruption and immortality.

*...and we shall be changed.* In many people, myself included, change is not always welcomed. If we learn contentment (Philippians 4:11-13; Paul wrote that he was "instructed" in this matter of contentment in a discontented world. When the Lord instructs us, He expects us to learn what He teaches us), the contented mind may not be a natural state. When things in life change, we must again "learn" the contentment lesson. Our natural disposition would be "Content" not to change. However, in the case before us, change is wholly a good thing. "**...be** changed" is passive. We shall not change ourselves, but the Lord shall raise us from death and change us as Paul has explained in this chapter. As much as I prefer things not changing, I rejoice at every aspect of the change that Paul has described in this chapter. My physical body shall finally be so "changed" as to rejoice in the Lord's grace and goodness fully and wholly. Lord, bring on the change! Come quickly!

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Worship service each Sunday  
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.  
Pastor