

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

Volume 32, Number 11

March 15, 2015



## Only One "It"

*So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. (1 Corinthians 15:42–49, KJV 1900)*

In most extended Bible themes, you can find a few brief verses that capture the essential idea in simple terms. In Biblical interpretation studies, the term "The perspicuity of Scripture" is often used to refer to this idea. The more important an idea is the more frequently **and clearly** it appears in Scripture. We've studied several verses in our examination of First Corinthians 15 that required some careful and thorough examination. In the verses before us, we see the resurrection set forth as simply as possible for human words and minds. If we follow the simplest grammatical and contextual rules, we must conclude that Paul was referring to one and only one "It" in these verses. The same "It" that is "sown" is the "It" that is raised. Let's start at the beginning.

*So also is the resurrection of the dead.* The word translated "dead" in this sentence is quite consistent in its New Testament meaning. Consider.

1. The English spelling of the Greek word translated "dead" is "nekrós." Several years ago as Sandra's mother was approaching death, we knew that she was slipping quickly, but we did not have any sense of the situation beyond our observations. Then we met the hospice nurse in the hallway and talked with her. She told Sandra that the process of "Necrosis" had started and that her passing was imminent. The word she used is derived from this Greek word. It quite specifically refers to death, in Scripture either to the death of the body or to dead bodies.
2. *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of **dead** men's bones, and of all uncleanness.* (Matthew 23:27; the word translated from this Greek word is highlighted)

3. *For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.* (James 2:26) In this verse both appearances of "dead" were translated from this word.

There can be no reasonable argument made that this word refers to anything other than a literal human body that has died. Further, the word translated "resurrection" in this verse and context literally means to "Stand up again," just as Lazarus stood up alive after Jesus raised him, restored life to his dead body. The word is further qualified by "To restore to life again." Simply stated, Paul is not teaching any form of gnostic or other mystical idea that denies the literal resurrection of the same body in which we live today, which shall die at some time in the future. Further, praise the Lord, He shall raise that very same body and change it so that it shall never again sin, be sick, suffer pain, or die, but it shall be wholly glorified so as to live eternally and praise God for redemption.

*It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption.* At death, the body is in some way or another buried in the ground, as a seed that a farmer sows in the field and covers with a light covering of soil. But that same body that is planted in its grave shall be raised by the power of God according to the Scriptures (To borrow the precise reasoning that Jesus used against the Sadducees). When He raises it, its form shall not be a return to the form in which it lived, weak, frail, subject to disease, suffering, sin, and death. All of these traits remind us of the word that Paul used to describe our body in death, "corruption." In vivid contrast, the Lord shall raise that same "It" that died in corruption, but when it appears in resurrection, it shall have undergone a miraculous transformation. It shall then be "Incorrupt" and "Incorruptible." It shall be immune from all the tentacles of corruption that characterized it in this life.

*It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory.* Notice the two contrasting words that Paul uses to identify the two opposite states of the body. When it dies, it is marked by dishonor. In itself and its

sinful condition and its death, there is no honor. The person who lived in that body may be honored by family, friends, and even by godly people, but their honor cannot alter what happened in its end. The person died, marking the dishonor of the fallen body by sin. But when the Lord raises that body, all of its former dishonor will have vanished. It no longer exists! The body comes out of death in glory. The word translated "glory" in this verse specifically refers to glory to the Lord. We sing a delightful hymn, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." Notice the title of that hymn, "Doxology." The Greek word translated "glory" in this verse is "Doxa" from which we derive our English word "Doxology." The same body that died in dishonor shall be raised in a form that uniquely and wholly is fitted to praise God for eternity. Consider just one reflection from Scripture of the redeemed in glory. *"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) They shall not be raised to glorify themselves or to parade their own crowns of glory, but rather to praise their God and Savior for their redemption.

*... it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.* One of the greatest examples of weakness imaginable for our physical body is death itself. As we age, various parts or systems of our body slowly deteriorate. They grow weaker than they were in our youth. Eventually one of those parts or systems will break, producing sudden death, or the whole body will slowly weaken till it can no longer support our life. Whether we die suddenly or slowly, death proclaims that weakness. Ah, but God shall raise that body that was characterized by weakness in great power. Our resurrection body state shall not be subject to deterioration or weakness. We shall not be subject to death or system failures in our resurrected body. We see and assess power based on what a person does. Scripture never gives us a detailed view of what heaven shall be after the resurrection, or before it for that matter, but Scripture does give us glimpses into that world of praise and glory to God. Nothing in Scripture's teaching gives any indication of weakness in that world of glory. Today we struggle against our physical and spiritual weakness. Paul described his own such struggle.

*I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. (Romans 7:21)*

Paul uses the term "law" to describe a principle that explains his present struggle, indeed, his present weakness. When he desired to do good, his performance of that good was hindered by the presence of evil within.

In this context, Paul indicates that he often does what he does not desire to do and does not

approve, and he often fails to do what he deeply desires to do. These words describe the struggle of every regenerate (Born again) child of grace. We live with weakness that shall surely end in death unless the Lord returns prior to our death. But Scripture's message reminds us. When our body rises at the Second Coming, all such weakness shall be truly "Left behind," and we shall arise in God's power to fully praise Him for eternity.

*It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.* Here Paul refers to the dominant principle that animates the physical body. We may have reason to think of this point more fully in later verses. We presently possess a natural body that is animated by our present nature. And since we presently possess both our old sinful nature and our new spiritual nature, we live in the conflict mentioned above. Both of these "Natures" struggle to drive our use of our body, our conduct. At death, the spirit returns to the Lord who gave it. It does not cease to exist. Nor does it slip into an unconscious state of "Soul sleep." After their deaths, both Lazarus and the rich man appear in Jesus' teaching as conscious and active. (Luke 16:20-31) Our spiritual "Nature" shall continue with the Lord, not die with the body.

When the resurrection occurs, our body shall be raised, no longer struggling with conflict and weakness. We shall have no fallen, sinful nature in heaven. Our spiritual nature shall fully govern our physical body so that we shall praise the Lord for endless eternity and without the conflict and weakness that not antagonizes us.

*And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.* In these verses Paul refers to the "first Adam" and the "last Adam." The first "Adam" is the first man whom the Lord created from dust, the man we see in Genesis. The "last Adam" is the Lord Jesus Christ. Both Adam and Jesus appear in Scripture as representative heads of their offspring. Despite being born of God and possessing that spiritual nature, we presently, in our physical body, continue to bear the image of that first Adam, including sin. In the resurrection, we shall drop that broken sinful image, and we shall then, in our resurrection body, bear the image of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The words of an old hymn delightfully capture Scripture's teaching regarding our glorious existence in glory with the Lord.

His own soft hand shall wipe the tear  
From sorrow's weeping eye.  
And pains and groans and griefs and fears  
And death itself shall die.

Little Zion Primitive Baptist Church  
16434 Woodruff  
Bellflower, California

Worship service each Sunday  
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.  
Pastor