

It Is Written

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"We Shall Not All Sleep, But We Shall All Be Changed"

By Jon Quinn

The Lord revealed much about the life to come, but certainly there are many things left unrevealed about it as well. We'll just have to wait until that day our faith becomes sight and we see for ourselves the magnitude of what God has planned for us. For now, we glimpse into eternity through the Scriptures, and await with anticipation our departure for new horizons.

The Holy Spirit revealed through the apostle Paul something that we may well have surmised even if He hadn't. But because it is a matter of revelation, we do not need to guess about it. It concerns the nature of our bodies.

Heaven is eternal. The bodies we have now are not. Flesh and blood just does not hold up very well...what would we look like after ten thousand years? Have you seen pictures of King Tut's mummy? And he's a young three thousand years old.

I don't think that flesh and blood would do all that well in heaven. But not to worry. Paul wrote the following concerning this: "Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold, I tell 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 trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:50-52).

God's spiritual children, the redeemed of the ages who have lived by faith, will rise to meet the Lord in the air clothed in changed bodies. No longer flesh and blood, but something far superior in nature and glory. The dead will be changed and rise, followed by those who are alive at Christ's coming (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17). Our spirits will be dressed in appropriate attire when we enter into eternity.

What will we look like? We do not know, but we do know we will share Jesus' glory; we'll be like Him (1 John 3:2). Jesus described the righteous as shining "forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matthew 13:43). But I cannot really tell you what size of shoes to buy, or even if you'll need any. That's O.K. though, because this world's shoes, like our bodies, wear out too.

Consider the limited, but revealing description of our new bodies as given by Paul in this context: "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, 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. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body" (1 Corinthian 15:42-44).

Raised Imperishable

"It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body" (1 Corinthians 15:42). When we enter into heaven, it will be with imperishable or incorruptible bodies. No longer flesh and blood, these bodies will be indestructible. Ten thousand years will have no effect on them at all.

Once when Paul was describing our eternal reward, he used athletic games as an illustration. Instead of a gold medal, the victor in first century games won, in addition to fame, a crown of olive branches, which was placed on his head by the presiding official at the awards ceremony. But it would not be long until the crown faded as the leaves crumpled and fell off. All that would remain would be the memory of the thrill of victory (1 Corinthians 9:24,25).

But our reward, or "crown," does not wither away. It is everlasting. So, to enjoy it, our bodies need to match. We are therefore raised imperishable, and those who are alive are simply changed "in a twinkling of an eye" (cf. Romans 2:6,7; 1 Peter 1:4).

Raised In Glory

"...it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory" (1 Corinthians 15:43). The word "glory" means "splendor,"

"radiance" or "honor." In this text, it is contrasted with the word "dishonor" which means "disgrace" or "shame." Our physical bodies, when lowered into the ground, are but empty shells no longer capable of sustaining our spirits. Jesus once described the hypocrisy of the Pharisees as "whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness" (Matthew 23:27). It would be no great reward to for these bodies to be raised if they were not also to be changed.

But they will be changed into new, radiant bodies. We have already noticed Jesus' description of them "shining forth as the sun." We now live in "the hope of glory" which is to one day "gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Colossians 1:27; 2 Thessalonians 2:14). In our resurrection we will be "set free from its (the physical realm) slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (Romans 8:21).

Raised In Power

"...it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power" (1 Corinthians 15:43b). The word for "power" means "might," "ability" or "force." This suggests a body with greatly increased capabilities. If given the option, most of us would agree with the song that said, "I'd rather be a sparrow than a snail" for this precise reason.

There are probably things in heaven to enjoy that we could not even begin to grasp in our present state. We are much too frail and weak. I am certain that this is so. For example, if I were to look upon the face of God with these eyes I would perish (Exodus 33:20; 1 Timothy 6:16). But with our new bodies which will possess far greater abilities, we shall look upon God's face with new eyes and rejoice (Revelation 22:4,5).

I suppose it is somewhat like a donkey listening to a beautiful music arrangement. There is not much appreciation for it. It's not the donkey's fault. He just is not equipped with what is necessary to enjoy good music. It does not lift his spirits and make him happy. He does not say to himself, "I wish I could play the piano like that!" Neither are we presently equipped to exult in all the glories of heaven, but with our change at the resurrection, we shall be because we shall be like Jesus.

Raised A Spiritual Body

"...it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15:44). Again, a contrast is made between what we are now and what we shall be. We live in a natural system now. This creation has many limitations, as we observed earlier (re: Romans 8:18-25). There is a new system on the way, and we will need spiritual, not natural, bodies to experience it.

Peter spoke of this new system of order. After describing the destruction and removal of this present natural system (2 Peter 3:8-12), he says, "But according to His promise we are looking for a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:13). This is a whole new system. The new earth is not this old natural earth; for it will be destroyed with intense heat." John said it will "pass away" (Revelation 21:1). The Hebrew writer said that the earth will be removed" so that other, eternal things may take its place (Hebrews 12:26-29).

This new system is spiritual in nature, and so, God will replace our natural bodies with spiritual bodies. With these new bodies, not of flesh and blood, we shall be ready, at long last, to go home.

Why Did The Angel Appear To Cornelius?

By Kyle Campbell

In Acts 10:3-6, an angel appeared to a good man named Cornelius. Cornelius was a "devout man, and one that feared God with all his house" and he "gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway" (Acts 10:2).

Most people would say that an angel appearing to them would save them. However, in Acts 10:6, the angel said that Peter would "tell thee what thou oughtest to do." If we combine that verse with Acts 11:14, we see that angel would "tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved." So the angel was not there to miraculously save Peter. He was merely there to direct him to send to Joppa for Peter.

The word of God saves us, not some miraculous manifestation of God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, or an angel. Peter, much later in his life, wrote, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit ..." The word of God, revealed by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13), saves you! Don't be fooled by people who don't know the scriptures into believing that some great event will occur. If you will study and obey, you can be saved! Don't fall for the delusion that you must "feel" your salvation. Many thousands (or millions) of people have felt thoroughly inadequate or depressed because they never "felt" the Holy Spirit or an angel "fill" them. All we need is to have the indwelling word within us and follow it (Colossians 3:16).