

JESUS NO LONGER FLESH – NOW "THAT SPIRIT"

"With what body do they come?" – 1 Cor. 15:35.

IN THE MAY 1 issue of THE WATCH TOWER we discussed the fact of the resurrection and showed from St. Paul's words that without God's purpose of a resurrection those who have fallen asleep in death would have perished as brutes. We followed with the Apostle the assurances that Christ did rise from the dead and did become the First-fruits of all those who have gone into the sleep of death. Others, indeed, were awakened temporarily – as, for instance, Jairus' daughter, Lazarus the friend of Jesus, and the son of the widow of Nain.

Yet none of those instances is counted as a resurrection, for it is said that Christ is the First-fruits of those who slept. Their awakening was merely of a temporary nature, and they soon relapsed into the sleep of death. They did not have a full resurrection – *anastasis* – a raising up to perfection of life, such as the redemptive work of Jesus guarantees to Adam and to all his race willing to accept the same under the terms of the New Covenant.

You will recall that in our last issue we demonstrated from the Scriptures that it is *not the body*, but the *soul*, that is promised a resurrection – that it was our Lord's *soul* that went to *sheol*, to *hades*, to the death state, and that God raised Him up from death on the third day. We noted a difficulty into which all Christendom was plunged by the unscriptural theory that it is the body that is to be resurrected. We now continue to search and note well further difficulties into which this error plunged us as believers in the words of Christ, particularly in connection with our Redeemer's resurrection.

WHAT WENT TO HEAVEN?

The ordinary thought in Christian minds in respect to Jesus' death and resurrection is that when He seemed to die He did not die; that He,

the being, the soul, could not die; that, instead, He went to Heaven, and then, on the third day, came back to get the body which had been crucified; and that He took it to heaven forty days later; that He has had that body ever since; and that He will have it to all eternity, marred with the print of the nails in His hands and feet, the thorns upon His brow, and the spear mark in His side. What a ghastly thought! How strange that we should ever have been misled into so unscriptural and unreasonable a theory! Some endeavor to gloss the matter by suggesting that our Lord's flesh is glorified – that it shines – the shining presumably making the wounds all the more conspicuous.

ABSURDITY OF THEORIES RECEIVED FROM DARK AGES

Our Methodist friends have not yet changed their statement of the matter, namely, "He ascended up on high, taking His fleshly body with Him, and all that appertained thereto, and sat down on the right hand of God." This medieval statement correctly admits that the fleshly body was not the Lord's, but that He, the soul, took it with Him as luggage. The statement, "and all that appertained thereto," presumably would refer to our Lord's sandals, walking stick and such clothing as the soldiers did not divide amongst them at the time of His crucifixion – if indeed He had any others! But our dear Methodist friends want to be sure that nothing was left behind.

All this is of a piece with the theory that the *saints* when they die go to heaven, and then, later, come back and get their bodies, "and all things appertaining thereto" – the inconveniences that they have been rid of for centuries! How many trunkloads of "things appertaining thereto" may be taken by some, and how mixed an assortment by others is not stated. Neither are particulars given respecting those whose clothing, etc., have meantime worn out. But we have had enough of this, if it has helped us to see the absurdity of our theories received from the "Dark Ages" – if it has awakened us to thought and to Bible investigation on this important and interesting subject.

WHAT SAY THE SCRIPTURES?

The Bible presentation of this subject is every way reasonable, consistent and harmonious. St. Paul points out that "there is a natural body and there is a spirit body." He does not mean and he does not say that the spirit body is a human body glorified. Quite to the contrary. He declares that "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God" – no matter how glorified it might be. A human being is so totally different from a spirit being that, as St. Paul says, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be," in our resurrection change; and the Scriptures do not even attempt to give us an explanation.

The Bible merely declares that as we now bear the image of the earthy, Adam, we shall, by the glorious resurrection change, be given a share in the nature and likeness of the Second Adam, our glorious Lord. We shall be like Him and see Him as He is; and, be it noted, we must change from flesh and blood conditions to spirit [R5025 : page 160] conditions by resurrection power, in order that we may see Him as He is. Surely this proves that our Lord Jesus is no longer flesh, as He once was – "in the days of His flesh." – Hebrews 5:7.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HEAVENLY AND EARTHLY BODIES

Our text calls attention to the difference between celestial bodies and terrestrial, or earthly bodies, and declares that they have different glories. It tells us that the first Adam was made a living soul, a human being, but that our Redeemer, who humbled Himself and took the earthly nature, "for the suffering of death," thereby became the Second Adam – the Heavenly Lord. The wide distinction between the Second Adam and the first Adam is clearly set forth. One was earthy and the other heavenly. As we now bear the image of the earthy, we shall, if faithful, bear the heavenly image of our Lord, the Second Adam, after our resurrection change.

St. Paul illustrates by saying that we know of many kinds of organisms on the earthy or fleshly plane – one flesh of man, another of beasts, another of birds and another of fish. But however different the organisms they are all earthy. So, on the heavenly plane, the spirit plane, there are varieties of organisms, but all are spirit.

Our heavenly Father is the Head or Chief – "God is a Spirit." Cherubim, seraphim, and the still lower order of angels are all spirit beings; and Christ Jesus, our Redeemer, after finishing the work of sacrificing appointed to Him, was resurrected to the spirit plane – far above angels, principalities and powers – next to the Father; and thus we read, "Now the Lord is that Spirit." And again that "He was put to death in the flesh, but quickened (or made alive) in the spirit." – I Pet. 3:18.

The more we examine the subject the more foolish and unscriptural the views handed to us from the Dark Ages appear. For instance, the Scriptures clearly set forth that our Redeemer, prior to becoming a Man, was a spirit being – "the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." His leaving the spirit plane to become a Man is Scripturally described as a great stoop or humiliation. Is it reasonable to suppose that the heavenly Father would perpetuate to all eternity that humiliation, after it had served its intended purpose? Surely He would do nothing of the kind!

The Bible tells us why Jesus humbled Himself to the human nature – "a little lower than the angels." It was because a man had sinned, and the Redeemer must, under the Law, be on the same plane of being as the one whom He would redeem. Thus Jehovah particularly specified, "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life." Hence the death of an angel, or of our Lord in His pre-human condition, could not have effected the payment of man's penalty and the consequent release of the condemned race. Thus again we read, "A body hast Thou prepared Me," "for the suffering of death." – Heb. 10:5; 2:9.

GOD HIGHLY EXALTED HIM

No one questions that this applies exclusively to our Lord's experiences during the years in which "He who was rich for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich." Surely it is un-supposable that the Father would arrange a Plan by which our Redeemer's faithfulness in accomplishing man's redemption would cost Him an eternity of poverty, humiliation, degradation to a plane "a little lower than the angels," while the Church would be made rich, and would attain a spirit state "far above angels" – be made "partakers of the divine nature." – 2 Peter 1:4.

On the contrary, the very same Apostle who tells us of our Lord's humiliation carries the matter to the climax, telling us of His faithfulness, as the Man Christ Jesus, unto death, even the death of the cross; and then he adds an assurance of the heavenly Father's faithfulness in not leaving His Son on a lower plane: "Wherefore," says the Apostle, "God also highly exalted Him, and hath given Him a name above every name." This, too, is in harmony with our Lord's words in His prayer to the Father. A joy had been set before Him by the Father – a joy of pleasing the Father, of bringing a blessing to mankind, and the joy also of exaltation, as a special reward for obedience.

But the Redeemer, ignoring all the promises of a higher glory as a reward for His faithfulness, merely prayed to the Father in these words, "Father, glorify Thou Me with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." In humility He asked no reward. He did not pray, Remember that you promised a still greater **[R5026 : page 160]** exaltation in glory! No, He would be quite content to have served the Father's purpose and plans and then to return to the glorious state in which He was before He left the glory, and for our sakes became poor and took upon Himself the human nature. And what said the heavenly Father in response to that prayer? Oh, we remember the words of Jehovah were, "I have glorified Thee, and I will glorify Thee

again," or further – the implication is that of a still higher glory than the one which He enjoyed before He was made flesh.

HE APPEARED AND DISAPPEARED

Two lines of difficulties present themselves, one of which can be answered and the other cannot. The unanswerable difficulty is where a natural-minded man undertakes to reason the subject out. He finds it impossible of comprehension as he finds other items of Divine revelation. St. Paul explains this, saying, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The Apostle proceeds to tell us that all men are natural men, except such as have been begotten by the Holy Spirit. All natural men will, in their resurrection, receive earthly, or human bodies, while all spiritual ones, New Creatures in Christ, will receive spirit bodies, as St. Paul explains in our context, verses 36-50.

Those of our readers, therefore, who have never accepted Christ, and made a full consecration of their all to be His disciples, following in His footsteps, may know that they have not been begotten of the Holy Spirit (because only upon these terms are any begotten of the spirit). These, therefore, we will ask to consider what we say, and hold it, if they please, tentatively, until such time as, in God's providence, they may be begotten of the Holy Spirit, and thus be enabled to understand spiritual matters such as this.

Another class who have difficulty on this subject are the spirit-begotten ones who have been entangled in their reasoning by the declaration of the creeds respecting the resurrection of the body. It is difficult to unlearn error. When visiting various lands and learning of the hold of superstition upon the heathens, we said to ourself, we believe that we Christians experience just as much difficulty in unlearning our errors as these heathens do in getting free from theirs.

THE UNCONSECRATED CANNOT UNDERSTAND SPIRITUAL PROBLEMS

Coming to the point of what is to be resurrected, we note the fact that our Lord appeared in a body of flesh, [R5026 : page 161] and showed the disciples the print of the nails and the hole made by the spear. But we, perhaps, failed to note that only twice did He thus appear, and but for a few moments each time. His other six or seven appearances during that forty days were also very brief, and in various bodies – once as a gardener, another time as a traveler – His third time as a stranger on the shore, and to Saul of Tarsus, as a spirit being of more than angelic brightness, "shining above the brightness of the sun at noonday." We overlooked the fact that these appearances, if all put together, would probably not have exceeded four hours out of the entire forty days in which our Lord tarried with His disciples after His resurrection and before His ascension. We were not critical students when we overlooked these things, and forgot to ask ourselves why these things were so.

Now we see more distinctly why our Lord did as He did. His disciples were natural men and therefore could not appreciate spiritual things. Furthermore, they could not receive the guiding of the Holy Spirit until the Lord's ascension and appearance in the presence of the Father on behalf of His Church, to make satisfaction for their sins, and to make them acceptable joint-sacrificers with Him. Meantime, had Jesus not tarried those forty days – had He ascended immediately after His resurrection – the disciples, stunned and bewildered, would have had no assurance of His resurrection. They would have found it impossible to go out and tell the people that He had risen from the dead when they had no proof to this effect.

And even if Jesus had appeared to them as He did to Saul of Tarsus, above the bright shining of the sun, this would not have been convincing and satisfactory. They might have said, Here is a phenomenon, but how can we positively associate it with the life and

death of Jesus? Matters were different with Saul of Tarsus. He needed something to thoroughly arouse him and to teach him for all time, and others through him, that the Lord is not a Man, but "that Spirit." Besides, some of the disciples who already believed were able to give Saul of Tarsus assurances of what they knew respecting the resurrection of Jesus and His ascension.

NO FOOLISH SUGGESTIONS IN BIBLE ABOUT THE RESURRECTION

The Lord adopted the only reasonable way of helping His disciples to understand that He was no longer dead – that He had risen from the dead – and that He was no longer human, but had been glorified, and had become a spirit being. The two things were necessary and they were done at the same time.

Even on the occasions when our Lord appeared in a body like to the one crucified, He took care that the manifestation should be under such conditions as would positively prove that He had become a spirit being. He came into the room where they were while the door was shut, and after a few words with them He vanished from their sight, as no human being could have done and as He never did during His earthly career. That the Apostles caught the thought is well evidenced by St. Paul's argument on the subject in the context. There is no foolish suggestion in the Bible about Jesus having a fleshly body in heaven – that is all in our creeds and hymn books, prepared for us by our well-meaning but mistaken forefathers, who used to burn one another at the stake if they failed to promptly agree together on such propositions.

We mourn the dead, but they shall wake;
The lost, but they shall be restored!
O! well our human hearts might break
Without that sacred word!
Dim eyes, look up! sad hearts, rejoice!
Seeing God's bow of promise through,
At sound of that prophetic voice:

"I will make all things new."

