

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. *Hebrews 12:12-13*

CAN THE DEAD LIVE AGAIN?

If a man die, shall he live again? Job 14:14

If the answer to this question is no, then the followers of CHRIST are the most miserable creatures upon the earth because that ONE upon whom all of their hopes are placed is a fraud and a failure, according to Paul's statement, *"But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins."* (1Cor 15:13-17)

Job also declared, *"For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."* (Job 19:25-26) So, when Job asked this question, he understood the centrality of this truth to true faith, and not only did he have a "hope" in the resurrection of his body, he also understood that the LIFE of the REDEEMER was the very basis upon which that "hope" stood. Apart from a union to the LIVING CHRIST no man can have any expectation of any such resurrection.

The funeral practices of a culture will indicate whether or not it is a pagan culture. These practices become ingrained in a society and one points out these errors at his own peril. The idea of keeping a body unburied for a few days after death. arose during a time when men became enlightened to the fact that death may only be apparent, and lacking scientific ability to determine death, the practice was adopted of keeping a body unburied in case he might "wake" up. This has morphed into a ceremony now where a man's body is put on display for folks to parade by and look at. How different such a notion is to the practice of the early believers. *"And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him."* (Act 5:6) They didn't even give folks an opportunity to comment on how natural he looked.

Of course the rising costs of our funeral pomp and display have caused many to resort to the pagan practice of burning bodies (cremation) in order to save a few bucks. Only the heathen ever burned the bodies of their dead in the scriptures and most pagan societies carry on the practice in the present time. The scriptures only record one instance of the LORD's disposal of a body and there we read, *"So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulcher unto this day."* (Deu 34:5-6) What other example do we need?

It has become commonplace in our society to speak of the dead as "being better off" or in a "better place". Practically every funeral is replete with these "comforting" words. I think they

might change their mind if they could speak to the rich man Luke speaks about, *“And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.”* (Luke 16:23)

It is also very commonplace for men to consider that men possess some sort of immortal soul which can never die. While it fits well with the common philosophy of men who still embrace the same lie which Satan foisted upon Eve, *“Ye shall not surely die.”* (Gen 3:4), this teaching cannot be found in the scriptures. This *“father of lies”* continues to weave his web of deception in the thinking of men that causes them to think that they cannot be ultimately destroyed and that they must somehow continue to live somewhere.

The popular religion of our society is a “quasi-christianity” which is a mixture of common folklore, natural philosophy, and biblical principles. Some ideas which it entertains are quite sacrosanct and woe be to the man who might point out the errors of them. One of these errors is the consideration that all men will live somewhere in some form forever, and that the resurrection is just an outgrowth of that fact.

Job clearly states the impossibility that the flesh or spirit of man can live again according to any natural or spiritual process which has its root in that nature. A tree might be cut down and for all appearances be dead, but there is a root still alive and even a stump might spring to life. Yet when a mans body is dead, it soon becomes lifeless dust and cannot in anywise regenerate itself unto life in a future time anymore than the same flesh and blood can be regenerated into a spiritual creature in the present time. That which is flesh is flesh.

By nature all men are dead in trespasses and sins and can in no wise live, hear, or “see” the kingdom of GOD apart from the miraculous work of the SPIRIT of GOD to quicken or give life to them. Even as Paul said, *“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.”* (Eph 2:1) and as John points out, those who believe are *“born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”* (John 1:13)

Adam died the day that he ate of the forbidden fruit and passed that death to his offspring, yet his body continued to function for nine hundred and thirty years. It is no less impossible that the descendents of Adam should raise that fleshly body which they received from him from the dead than it is for them to quicken themselves to spiritual life. Apart from HIS power both body and spirit shall remain in the tomb.

There is a general resurrection of the bodies of all men. Some are raised unto eternal life and some are merely reanimated (much like the zombies of folklore) to face judgment and eternal death. (see John 5:28,29;Rev..20:14;21:8) The power which causes them to come out of the grave is the same but the purpose and result is startlingly different. Those whom the LORD has caused to die in the hope of CHRIST’s resurrection shall be brought forth into the realms of endless bliss as they are brought face to face with HIM who has been their DESIRE and DELIGHT.

Gone shall be all of their darkness, swallowed up in the LIGHT of HIM who shines brighter than ten thousand noonday suns. *If a man die shall HE live again?* Only if that man is found in CHRIST who purchased him with HIS own blood and has now redeemed HIS possession which was HIS before the foundation of the world. These shall not be ashamed at HIS coming, for they look for HIM as those who long to behold their KING and REDEEMER through undimmed eyes. This is the epitome of eternal life. They live because their CHAMPION has triumphed gloriously in their behalf and forever removed the sting of death and the victory of the grave. *“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Rom 8:38-39)

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