

GRACE GAZETTE

Volume XII

Issue 21

Published occasionally for Zion's mourners

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

THE NATURE OF THE RESURRECTION

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Phillipians 3:20-21

When we use the word "conversation" in the present day, we are generally referring to a dialog between two or more people. Yet the Greek word ("politeuma") which is used here, literally means citizenship or community. In fact the root of this Greek word is where we get our English word "politics".

Now it is indeed true that you can tell the country of a man's "citizenship" (or more accurately his nativity) by the manner of his "speech". For instance, if someone heard me speaking they would not mistake me for an Englishman nor even a resident of New York City. They would know that I come from the Deep South among the palmetto bushes, gopher tortoises, and sand hills.

Beyond that a man's interests and concerns are also belied by his speech. In fact the LORD pointed this out, quite pointedly, saying, "*O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.*" (Mat 12:34-35) Solomon said, "*A fool uttereth all his mind.*" (Pro 29:11)

So it is a true thing that those who have their "citizenship" in heaven are indeed mindful of heavenly things and even their "manner of speech" will testify of it. Paul is speaking here of the fact that those who are "born again" (or properly born from above) have renounced their citizenship in this world and are expectantly waiting to be clothed upon with an incorruptible body in the day of the resurrection. This is that hope, without which Paul said that we would be "*most miserable.*" (see I Cor. 15:19) "*They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*" (Joh 17:16)

Nearly all of the religions of the world teach that there is an afterlife of some sort, which men will enter into when they have died. It is commonly assumed by the multitudes that men go to live in a place called heaven when once their life in this world is done. Of course some also assign the place of that abode as being the torments of hell, depending on several factors which vary from one religious order to the next and the degree to which they wish to startle men into walking in a fashion which will assure that they do not arrive there.

We are quite certain that there is a place called Heaven and also a place called Hell but find little in the common descriptions of either that are not based as much on human suppositions as they are from the scriptures.

The average "Christian" has been conditioned to consider that man has a principle of eternal life dwelling within them which causes them to continue on into this afterlife. It is commonly taught that the souls of all men will live on somewhere because of this "immortality." The only "immortality" which is spoken of in the scriptures which men might enjoy, is that which is bestowed upon them by the ONE who alone has "*immortality*" (see I Tim. 6:16) and who "*inhabiteth eternity.*"

(see Isa.57:15) In nature they possess nothing that is either eternal or immortal and do currently abide under the shadow of death, both naturally and spiritually.

The scripture is quite plain that all men by nature are "*dead in trespasses and sins*". (Eph.2:1) They abide in death and have nothing to look forward to in their natural state, at the cessation of this mortal life but "death", judgment, and destruction. In fact the very fact that their mortal bodies die is the result of the corruption caused by sin which eats away at their vitals.

Yet such a bleak outlook is not the "inheritance" of those who are chosen in CHRIST and "*ordained unto eternal life*." It is to these "saints" that Paul writes, with words of encouragement and a reminder of the certainty of their resurrection, even as Job declared, "*And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:*" (Job 19:26)

The natural religious man's hope is that he shall be raised from the dead but he would be content and even expects and is desirous that he shall be raised in the very same body in which he was buried. He expects and looks forward to a continuation of the same carnal pleasures which he has enjoyed in the present time. If he loved fishing then he expects to be fishing without interruption or problem, always loading the boat and never getting sunburned. If he loves food then he expects that he can eat dessert all day long, etc. He wants to stroll over heaven with his loved ones and sit on the front porch of heaven and reminisce over old times. Such is the carnal understanding of the resurrection to the satisfaction of the natural man.

The resurrection of which Paul speaks involves not simply a reanimation of the carnal body and its thought process, but rather a transformation or change of it from that which is "vile" (i.e.; full of corruption) to that which is fashioned like the glorious body of JESUS CHRIST. That man who has been born again recoils in horror at the thought of spending eternity in the same corrupt tabernacle in which he presently dwells and groans and travails until this "change" comes.

Paul said that HE would "*change our vile body*". This word "change" comes from a Greek word which has the same root that we get our word "metamorphosis" from. It means to transform something from one form to another. We have all seen a caterpillar go into a cocoon and emerge as a butterfly. We have no doubt that the butterfly is the same entity as the caterpillar but there is no similarity between what the butterfly is now and what it was when it was a caterpillar. Nor would we desire to see the caterpillar rather than the butterfly.

In like fashion, those who are born again by the SPIRIT of GOD are the objects of this change which shall occur in the day when HE gathers HIS own. One would not expect a goat to emerge from a cocoon as anything but a dead goat regardless of the finery in which it might be wrapped or who did the wrapping. Only those caterpillars (or worms, see Isa.41:14) which have the principle of the life of a butterfly (eternal life) in them. (see Col 1:27) can come out of the cocoon (or grave) as butterflies. That which is sown in the ground as good seed shall be manifested in its fullness as the inheritors of eternal life in the day of the resurrection, when our LORD comes.

"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." (1Cor 15:42-44)

The LORD stood on a Judean hillside and called Lazarus from the grave even though he had been there for four days and the vileness of his body was witnessed by all. This was a glorious event but is merely an exhibition of the LORD's power over death to reanimate one who had succumbed to the wages of sin. For Lazarus was not taken into glory because he was merely raised in a natural body which one day had to endure the same death again. Lazarus was raised but he was not "*changed*" (at that point at least).

The resurrection of the saints is far more glorious than this for they shall be transformed. "*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.*" (1Co 15:51-53)