

[Sunday, October 20, 2013; Outline].

In 1665 from Bedford Prison, 37-year-old John Bunyan wrote a treatise entitled *“The Resurrection of the Dead, and Eternal Judgment, or The truth of the Resurrection of the bodies, both of good and bad at the Last Day: asserted, and proved by God’s word; Also the manner and order of their coming forth of their graves; as also, with what bodies they do arise; Together, with a discourse of the Last Judgment, and the final conclusion of the whole world.”*

That is quite a title, but each clause is potent with Bible truth. The primary Bible texts relied upon by Bunyan in this work was:

"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" –(1 Cor. 15:51,52).

"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" –(John 5:28,29).

Today, my goal is to provide an overview of what Bunyan calls “The Manner of the Resurrection of the Just.” The imprisoned Bunyan was a detailed and deep-thinking writer. Neither time nor attention span will allow me to go into the deep weeds of Bunyan’s writings, but I hope to give a fair glimpse into his main points.

How are the dead raised up and with what body do they come? (1 Cor. 15:35). By a similitude of seed sown in the earth, Paul makes these points –

1. In the context of a resurrection, our reviving or rising must be after death. (1 Cor. 15:36).
2. At the time of our rising, we shall not only revive and live, but be changed into a far more glorious state than when we were sown.
3. Neither its quickening nor its transcendent splendor shall hinder it from being the same body – as to the nature of it – that was sown in the earth. To every seed his own body. (1 Cor. 15:38).

For further illustration, Paul then offers up three more similitudes – FIRST, the variety and glory of flesh; SECOND, the difference of glory that is between heavenly bodies and those that are earthy; and, THIRD, the difference that is between the glory of the light of

the sun, from that of the moon and also how one star differs from another in glory. See if this excerpt helps –

**“Now mark it; he doth not speak here of the natures of each of these bodies; but of the transcendent glory of one above another. ‘The glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another.’ Wherefore I say, at our rising, we shall not change our nature, but our glory; we shall be equal to the angels (Luke 20:36), not with respect to their nature, but glory. The nature also of the moon is one thing, and the glory of the moon is another; and so one star also differeth from another in glory.”**

That Luke passage just cited reads as follows: “Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.”

Now, as further to the manner of the saints’ rising, the apostle Paul branches out in 4 particulars –

1. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption;
2. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory;
3. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; and,
4. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

**Incorruption:** We are brought into this world in sin and corruption, and our short, shadow-like lives are attended with vanity and vexation of spirit. But once raised from the dead incorruptible, these things that now in our life annoy us are effectually destroyed. There will be no more pain, because the former things -- that is all our corruptibleness -- “are passed away.” (Revelation 21:4). On this point, Bunyan specifically writes: **“There shall be in our resurrection no corruption, either of body or of soul; no weakness, nor sickness, nor anything tending that way; as he saith, He will present us "to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph 5:27).”**

**Glory:** The dishonor that attends the saint at his departing this world is very great, but that sheep is raised in glory. Glory is the sweetness, comeliness, purity and perfection of a thing. So, to arise in glory is to arise in all the beauty and utmost completeness that is possible for a human creature to possess; all its features and members inconceivably beautiful. In a word, if incorruptibleness can put a beauty upon our bodies when they arise, we shall have it. **“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”** (Colossians 3:4).

Power: While we are here, we are attended with so many weaknesses and infirmities that in time the least sickness is too hard for us and takes away our strength, beauty, days, breath and life. “Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? Or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?” (Job 38:17). But we will be raised in power and in that power all these earthly things are as far below us as a grasshopper is below a giant; at the first appearance of us the world will tremble! Consider these verses in this context: **“And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.”** (Matthew 28:2-4).

Spiritual body: This is the last of these 4, but is the reason for the other three. The risen body is incorruptible, glorious and powerful because it is spiritual. This Bunyan quote captures the concept:

**“Christ hath shewed us, what our body at our resurrection shall be, by shewing of us, in his word, what his body was, at and after, his resurrection. We read, that his body, after he was risen from the dead, though it yet retained the very same flesh and bones that did hang upon the cross, yet how angelical was it at all times, upon all occasions! He could come in to his disciples with that very body, when the doors were shut upon them: He could, at pleasure, to their amazement, appear in the twinkling of an eye, in the midst of them: he could be visible and invisible as he pleased, when he sat at meat with them: in a word, he could pass and repass, ascend and descend in that body, with far more pleasure and ease, than the bird by the art of her wing.”**

To mount up to heaven and to descend again at pleasure shall, in that day, be ordinary. At that time, “nothing shall be impossible” (Matthew 17:20) because our change will be “according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” (Philippians 3:21). All impossibilities and hindrances will be removed.

There are many adumbrations of this resurrection reported in the Bible. Our body and soul will be with God in heaven, as exhibited by Enoch (Genesis 5:24; Hebrews 11:5) and Elijah (2 Kings 2:11). Remember also the Shunammite’s son who was raised from the dead by Elisha (2 Kings 4:32-34), Jarius’s daughter, raised up by Jesus (Luke 8:41-55), Lazarus, also raised by the direct command of Christ (John 11:43-44) and Tabitha, raised from the dead by Peter (Acts 9:36-41). And probably most notable of these instances is that found at Matthew 27:52-53:

**And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.**

When the writer to the Hebrews had given a catalogue of the heroes of the faith and said “these all died in faith” (Hebrews 11:13), in the faith of what? That they should lie and rot in their grave eternally? NO! They all died in faith that they should rise again and therefore counted this world not worth the living in that they “might obtain a better resurrection.” (Hebrews 11:35). It is at the time of that “better resurrection” the saints will hear that most pleasant voice proclaiming “Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.” (Isaiah 26:19).

I love you.

Amen!