

## ANTHROPOLOGY (13)

The Bible teaches that there are two specific groups of people who will not face physical death:

**(Group #1)** - Those who are alive at the Rapture . I Thess. 4:13-18; I Cor. 15:51-53

**(Group #2)** - Those who are alive at the Second Coming. Mt. 24:29-31

One of the great misconceptions which is often times stated at funerals is that the grave is the “final resting place” of a person. The Bible makes it clear that all bodies will be raised from the dead (John 5:26-29; Acts 24:15; Rev. 20:13).

This reality is particularly exciting for the believer in Jesus Christ and we do have some biblical information as to what our resurrected bodies will be like:

**(Fact #1)** - Our resurrected bodies will be Christ-like . Phil. 3:20-21; I John 3:2

**(Fact #2)** - Our resurrected bodies will be tangible . John 20:26-28; Lk. 24:36-42;  
Acts 10:39-41

**(Fact #3)** - Our resurrected bodies will be glorious . Mt. 17:1-3; Rom. 8:18.

**(Fact #4)** - Our resurrected bodies will be recognizable . Mt. 17:3-4

**(Fact #5)** - Our resurrected bodies will be powerful . Jn. 20:11-14, 19-20, 26-27

One central passage that teaches us much concerning the resurrection of the body is I Cor. 15:35-53 . This passage makes it very clear that God not only has the power to raise the body, but also very pointedly describes information regarding the new body of a believer.

To understand this important passage (**I Corinthians 15:35-53**) of Scripture, there are six anthropological observations we want to make:

**(Observation #1)** - The word “sown” refers to dying and burying . 15:36-37, 42-44

**(Observation #2)** - The word “sleep” refers to lack of life in the body. 15:51

**(Observation #3)** - The word “perishable” refers to a body that can decay . 15:42, 53

**(Observation #4)** - The word “imperishable” refers to a body that cannot decay . 15:42, 53

**(Observation #5)** - The word “mortal” refers to a body that can die . 15:53

**(Observation #6)** - The word “immortality” refers to a body that cannot die . 15:53

The basic idea of mortality is that of a body which is capable of suffering a mortal wound. These terms are not speaking of the soul, but specifically deal with the resurrection of the physical body. What Paul is saying is that the believer will someday have a physical body that will be raised from the dead by the God who created all forms of life. This new body will never decay or die. The old body may decay and turn to ashes and dust, but the new, glorified body will never decay or die. There are those who do not understand this important doctrine and as a result they place far too much emphasis on our present body. The Apostle Paul minimized his temporal body, referring to it as a tent or a house about to be torn down (II Cor. 5:1-2). Paul certainly believed in glorifying God while in our present bodies (I Cor. 6:19-20), but he longed for the day when he could get out of his temporal body and go home to be with the Lord.

## ANTHROPOLOGY (14)

**QUESTION #12** – What about the issue of cremating a body rather than burying a body?

Those who emphatically oppose cremation have very little doctrinal understanding of this part of anthropology. James W. Fraser, a Baptist minister who is emphatically opposed to cremation, has written a pamphlet “Cremation Is It Christian?” This pamphlet is filled with many inaccurate statements and conclusions not based on sound doctrine. For the sake of exposing the student to this issue, we will summarize and briefly refute his main arguments against cremation. Fraser offers the following biblical verses to support his position:

**(Proof #1)** - I Corinthians 6:19-20—He claims these verses prove that we should not be cremated because our bodies aren’t ours, but the temple of the Holy Spirit, which should glorify God.

Once we are dead, we are no longer connected with this fleshly, earthly body. The immaterial side to us, including the Spirit’s Word, is separated from the old fleshly body and we are present with the Lord, glorifying Him. At that point, it doesn’t matter what is done to this old body. These verses are combating immorality during life, not cremation after death (i.e. 6:16, 18).

**(Proof #2)** - Amos 2:1—Fraser claims this verse proves cremation is forbidden by God and in fact was an unpardonable sin of Moab, which brought the judgment of God.

If we check the biblical record to discover exactly what it was that Moab did in a war with Edom, we will discover this is not a true interpretation. Moab drove Edom to their own territory and apparently opened royal graves and took out the body of the king and burned it. In ancient times, this was a terrible desecration and sacrilege. Furthermore, the burning of a body had false worship ramifications. According to II Kings 3:26-27, the thing God held Moab accountable for was the fact that he offered humans as burnt offerings to foreign gods. In this case, the king offered his own son as a burnt offering, who was to reign next as king. The burning of bones was not a matter of cremation, but execution in the act of worshipping a false god. This passage has nothing to do with the decision of a family to cremate a body.

**(Proof #3)** - Several O.T. examples are cited such as taking Joseph’s bones back to his homeland (Gen. 50:24-25).

God has promised Abraham’s seed a land. Joseph was a key leader living in Egypt. By this act, he was making a statement that he believed someday God would give Israel her land, just as He had promised to Abraham (Gen. 15:18-21). God has not promised N.T. believers a land. He has promised us heaven. When we die, we get to go home to live where we belong. Our home is not this land or this earth, our home is in heaven. Therefore, once we are dead, we are home and it doesn’t matter what is done with our bodies. These O.T. Jewish examples are not meant to be a treatise against cremation, they are meant to be a Jewish statement of land promises for Israel (Ezek. 37:1-14).

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**(Proof #4)** - “Cremation destroys the sacred memory of our beloved dead.” Mr. Fraser claims cremation is one of the quickest ways to destroy the memory of the one who died.

This is one of the most ludicrous, illogical and idiotic concepts this teacher has ever read. I have personally known of a daughter, who has a picture of her father, along with his cremated remains in her living room and continually reflects on many blessed and wonderful memories she shared with him. All of the N.T. churches are ruins today. In fact, it is impossible for us to even locate exactly where some of those churches stood. We, however, have not forgotten about those churches in Corinth, Rome, Ephesus or Thessalonica. In some of those churches we even know some of the names of the people connected with them. I have known of husbands and wives who have had their mates cremated, who continue to remember and honor their mate and thank God for the years they had together. Do we dare suggest that the relatives of those who died at sea, or in a crash or in war are any less loved because we cannot honor a dead body? Absolutely not! Memories are thoughts of the mind and they are not contingent upon the state of the body in a grave. Mr. Fraser is totally distorted in his thinking.

Cremation is not a subject that is specifically addressed in the Bible. It becomes a personal and individual decision. **The main N.T. teaching is not one that is concerned with the state of the body, but the state of the soul.** Therefore, on this issue it is best to follow Paul’s advice: “The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves” (Rom. 14:22).

**QUESTION #13** – When a believer dies, does he receive a new, temporary body?

The question is **not** “Is a believer who dies recognizable in heaven,” the question is “Does a believer in Jesus Christ, who dies before the Rapture, receive some temporary or intermediate material body until such time when the believer receives his new glorified body at the resurrection?” This is a very difficult question and more than likely the answer to this is No! We say “more than likely” because there are no specific statements in Scripture which address this. We may conclude the following:

- 1) In passages that speak of physical death, there is a clear separation between the material and immaterial. II Cor. 5:18
- 2) In passages that speak of those who have physically died, one of the great promises is that the immaterial part will be reunited with the new glorified material part (I Thess. 4:13-18; I Cor. 15:51).
- 3) If we were given a new temporary body at death, what happens to us at the resurrection ? Why is there no mention of this?
- 4) When a person is taken to heaven, it doesn’t seem that the issue of a body makes any difference . II Cor. 12:2-3

When a believer dies, we know that he is fully aware of his state in glory and we know that in some way he is recognizable (Lk. 16:23). Although all of the intimate details have not been revealed, we cannot be wrong in concluding that at death the immaterial part of a person which is recognizable instantly goes to be with the Lord (for the believer) until the resurrection, which will occur at the end of the Church Age, in which a new, glorified body will be reunited with the immaterial part of a person.

## ANTHROPOLOGY (16)

**QUESTION #14** – What does it mean that man was created in the “image of God?” Gen. 1:26

The idea that we were created in the “image” and “likeness” of God is not just an O.T. idea. This important revelation is repeated in both the Old Testament and the New Testament (Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1, 3; I Cor. 11:7; James 3:9).

These words clearly indicate that human beings are, in some way, a concrete reflection of God ! Since these statements are found in both the O.T. and N. T., we may assume that in some way this reflection of God still exists. Since we have clearly established that there is a material part to man and an immaterial part to man, it is appropriate to carefully study to determine the meaning of this very important concept.

In looking at certain key, biblical points, we may conclude the following concerning being created in the “image” and “likeness” of God:

**(Conclusion #1)** - “Image of God” is not a major emphasis on a physical likeness.

Although we will not deny that God formed the material part of man from the dust of the ground and we also will not deny that the human body is a carefully constructed masterpiece of God’s creative genius, and that when Jesus Christ came to this earth He came in human form, this is not the primary emphasis of the phrase “image of God.” We come to this conclusion based on the following observations:

**Observation #1** - God is spirit . John 4:24

It may be observed that when God originally created man it was many years before the physical birth of Jesus Christ. The Godhead, at the point in history in which this decision was made, was immaterial, not material. This legitimately enables us to look to the immaterial part of man to discover the meaning.

**Observation #2** - Animals have bodies .

Animals have material bodies which, in some ways, are superior to human bodies. There is no place in Scripture where it is stated that an animal was created in the “image of God.” We are quick to admit that God is the creator of animal life (Gen. 1:20-25). There is no question that He has masterfully created every physical body, including both animals and humans, yet no animal is created in the “image of God.” We would conclude from this that the primary emphasis of these concepts is not a physical emphasis.

**Observation #3** - Material structures are inanimate .

A material structure of anything, including a body, is not, in and of itself, alive. In order for something to be alive, there must be a special life dynamic given by God to that structure.

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It is precisely this that brings the structure to life. Although God formed man from the dust of the ground (Gen. 2:7), it was not until He breathed into his nostrils “the breath of life” that man “became a living soul.”

Our conclusion, based on these observations, is that the main idea behind being created in the “image of God” is not that which is physical or material.

**(Conclusion #2)** - “Image of God” is an emphasis on a natural and moral likeness.

**Observation #1** - The natural likeness refers to the personality.

As we previously studied in Theology Proper, God is a Person comprised of intellect, emotion and will. God’s intellect is very systematic and orderly. The earliest record we have of man’s design by God indicates he had these same qualities:

(Quality #1) - Man was created with a will –he could make choices–Gen. 2:16-17

(Quality #2) - Man was created with emotions –he needed companionship–Gen. 2:18

(Quality #3) - Man was created with an intellect –he could govern a garden and animals–  
Gen. 2:15, 19-20

This was a natural personality likeness between God and man.

**Observation #2** - The moral likeness refers to righteousness and holiness .

It seems evident that when Adam and Eve were first created, God gave them a moral character that was very reflective of Him. They had a unique ability to look at all of life in a total purity, prior to the fall (Gen. 2:25; 3:7). The character of man was originally so righteous and holy that God, Himself, classified His creation as being “very good” (Gen. 1:31).

At the moment of sin, it was not the material part of Adam and Eve that changed, it was their immaterial part that immediately changed. Their intellect, emotions and will and righteous character were so greatly affected that they could not face each other and they could not face God (Gen. 3:7-8). At the moment of the fall, it was not their physical or material structure that changed, it was their immaterial structure that immediately and drastically changed. This, then, leads us to the conclusion that being created in the “image of God” is more of an emphasis on the immaterial than the material.

**QUESTION #15** – What part of the human being is still today in the “image of God?”

Since sin has entered humanity—we no longer have the same Edenic existence that Adam and Eve had. Therefore, we need to consider what exactly is the image of God today.