



When we traveled to Minneapolis for the Bible quiz tournament last weekend, we went early and visited the Minneapolis Science Museum to see their special exhibit on the Dead Sea Scrolls. In case you are not familiar with them, starting in 1947, the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in 11 in caves near the Dead Sea and contained jars of scrolls that were two thousand years old. Except for the book of Esther, every OT book was represented among the scrolls. For believers, the chief benefit of these scrolls is the fact that they were about one thousand years older than any



OT scrolls and they demonstrated the incredible accuracy of subsequent transmissions of the Bible. In other words, the Dead Sea Scrolls almost perfectly matched the much newer ones which proved their accuracy.

When you think of scrolls, you probably think of along scroll like this one rolled up on both sides. This is how a complete and well preserved scroll would look, but much of the Dead Sea Scrolls are mere fragments. The exhibit at the museum had six portions of scrolls and the one that most captured my attention was a fragment from Isaiah, which looked a bit like this. This fragment contains the last two verses of Isaiah 53.



After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

As the Ethiopian eunuch said to Philip, “Who is this prophet talking about, himself or someone else.” This is about our suffering servant, Jesus Christ. This is a description of what Jesus accomplished on the cross. Each scroll in the museum had a large English translation next to it which means that every person that walked through the exhibit read the gospel message. How often does that happen—a gospel message presented in a secular science museum?!¹ If this is what Christ accomplished on the cross, was this the completion of his work of salvation? The

resurrection was the completion Christ's work of salvation for without it, there was no ultimate victory over sin and death. Without the resurrection, Jesus' work on the cross is powerless. As Paul says earlier in the chapter, if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins."

Now let's apply this to us. When will the believer's salvation be completed? Most of us will be tempted to say when we die and go to heaven, but that would be an incomplete answer. Our salvation will not be completed until Christ returns and we receive our resurrected and glorified bodies. This is the cry of the NT writers seen in verses like Phil. 3:20-21. *But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.* Paul's ultimate desire was not just heaven, but the return of Christ and the transformation of his body.

I think that most Christians tend to downplay or even forget about the resurrection of our bodies. This is why Paul used such strong language in 1 Corinthians 15.

³⁵ *But someone may ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?"* ³⁶ *How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.* ³⁷ *When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else.* ³⁸ *But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body.* ³⁹ *All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another.* ⁴⁰ *There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another.* ⁴¹ *The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor.* ⁴² *So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable;* ⁴³ *it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;* ⁴⁴ *it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.* ⁴⁵ *So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"^a; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.* ⁴⁶ *The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual.* ⁴⁷ *The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven.* ⁴⁸ *As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven.* ⁴⁹ *And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.* ⁵⁰ *I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.* ⁵¹ *Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—* ⁵² *in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.* ⁵³ *For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.* ⁵⁴ *When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."^c ⁵⁵ *"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"^d* ⁵⁶ *The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.* ⁵⁷ *But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

⁵⁸ *Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.*

The NIV's translation of "How foolish" does not communicate the actual sense of Paul's words. Anyone who asks such a question is not merely asking a foolish question, Paul is claiming that they were actually a fool. In other words, only a fool can ask such a foolish question. And what is a fool? "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'" We have to be careful, however, because not everyone who wants to know about our future resurrection bodies is a godless fool. Paul was addressing those in Corinth who did not believe in the resurrection of Christ. He spent the first half of chapter fifteen proving the reality and necessity of Christ's resurrection in part so that he could prove our future resurrection. We may not be a godless fool, but chances are most of us don't know enough about our resurrected and glorified bodies.

Before we get deeper into this passage in Corinthians, let me show you from a few other Scriptures how our salvation will not be complete until our bodies are resurrected. We already looked at the Philippians 3 passage. The next is Romans 8:22-23. *We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.* The groaning that we all feel to be free of these bodies of sin and death is more than just a desire to be in heaven, but to be clothed with our resurrected bodies.

Our resurrection will be the completion of our redemption. To be raised with imperishable bodies, as Paul described in Corinthians, is the same thing as being "glorified." We see this completion later in Romans 8. *For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.* ³⁰ *And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.* You should recognize the word *justify* or *justification* from a weeks back. We are justified by faith in Christ alone. He credits his righteousness to our account. You can see that justification is part of the process of salvation. This passage is sometimes called the "golden chain of redemption" because the various aspects of salvation are inseparably linked together—foreknew, predestined, called, justified, glorified. And where are we in this process? We are in between justification and glorification. If you are a justified believer, will you be glorified? Absolutely, because this chain cannot be broken. If you have been justified, you will be glorified. It is the completion of redemption. And remember that being glorified is not merely going to heaven—it cannot happen until the return of Christ and resurrection of our bodies—when our lowly bodies will be like his glorified body.

In order to explain the future resurrection of our bodies, Paul used examples from the fields of botany, biology, zoology and astronomy. The botany comes first in verse 37—*When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else.* We have had an early and beautiful spring this year and if you haven't already begun to start your gardens indoors, it won't be that long before vegetable and flower gardens are in bloom and seeds and bulbs of all kinds are planted into the rich soil. Therefore, the truth of verse 37 is plain to everyone. *When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else.* If you plant a little tiny carrot seed, you will reap bunches of long,

orange carrots. If you plant a broccoli seed, you will reap large, flowering buds of green broccoli. In every case, what is reaped from the ground is very different than what was sown into it.

His conclusion comes at verse 42. *So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable;*⁴³ *it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;*⁴⁴ *it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.* Paul used all of these comparisons to illustrate the continuity and discontinuity between our natural bodies and resurrected bodies—perishable/imperishable; dishonor/glory; weakness/power; natural/spiritual. The conclusion is that it will still be us. My resurrected body will be me. Obviously, my soul will be reunited with my body, so it is still me, but it will be a better me. This will be the body that I will inhabit for all eternity. It will be the completion of my salvation.

You do understand how different this is from many religions. Many eastern religions like Hinduism or most New Age religions significantly downplay the physical body. In fact, they all believe that the physical is a hindrance to the spiritual life. In their belief, true spiritual awakening cannot happen until we are forever free from our physical bodies. They believe that they will float around as spirits or more precisely, that they will all be mixed together in one enormous soup of impersonal spirit. In their belief, there is no “me” in the afterlife. The concept of personhood disappears and all that is left is us, just one gigantic life force. But Scripture is clear in condemning this belief. There is a true “me” in eternity and it is the same “me,” just a better “me.” God did not create the universe in all of its massive size, glory and beauty just to teach us that the physical realm was evil. God created the universe and called it “very good.” By using what we call the various disciplines of science, botany, astronomy, zoology and biology, he is showing us the foundational nature of the physical realm.

Let’s look at each scientific discipline. Seeds, wheat and other grain are listed in verses 37-38 which would be the field of botany. In verses 40-41 Paul lists the sun moon and stars which is the field of astronomy. Birds and fish in verse 39 are in the realm of Zoology and the same verse lists humans and animals which are two areas of biology and zoology. This short list covers quite a bit of science, does it not. Actually, nearly every scientific discipline would fall under one of these categories. But Paul had something much greater than science in mind. Let your mind go back to when we covered the first chapter of Genesis and tell me, what day were seeds, wheat and other grains created? They were created on day 3. How about the sun, moon and stars? Day 4. (Are you seeing a pattern yet?!) Birds and fish were created on day 5 and animals and humans were created on day 6.

Creation Day 3— seed, wheat, other grains = **Botany** (37-38)

Creation Day 4— Sun, moon and stars = **Astronomy** (40-41)

Creation Day 5— birds and fish = **Zoology** (39)

Creation Day 6— humans, animals = **Biology, Zoology** (39)

In case you have any doubts that Paul had creation in mind, jump down to verse 45.

⁴⁵ So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. In the NT, whenever you see the phrase, “it is written,” that is always your clue that the writer is quoting from the OT. Specifically, Paul quoted from Genesis 2:7. *The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man (adam) became a living being.* If you recall, the Hebrew word for “man” is “adam,” which gives you a perfect quotation from Genesis 2.

Paul filled out this quotation in the next few verses.

⁴⁶ *The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual.* ⁴⁷ *The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven.* ⁴⁸ *As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven.* ⁴⁹ *And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.*

That last verse is one of the keys to this passage. Since Jesus was resurrected from the dead, so we will be resurrected. Our future resurrection as believers is just as certain as the resurrection of Christ. And if you go back to creation, as Paul clearly does, you can see the big picture, from beginning to end.

1. Creation of heaven and earth—Gen 1—*God created the heavens and the earth*
2. Creation of natural body and spirit (*the first Adam*)—Gen 1-2
3. Corruption of body and spirit Gen 3
4. Death & Resurrection of Christ (*the last Adam*)
5. Rebirth of spirit—2 Cor. 5:17—*he is a new creation...*
6. Resurrection of (spiritual) body 1 Cor 15
7. Recreation of heaven and earth Rev. 21:1—*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth.*

Point four above stands out because it is both the center of human history and the center of Paul’s argument. Jesus is the “last Adam” and his resurrection is the final prove and ultimate power of his work on the cross. Notice the order of events. Numbers five and six undo what happened in point three, the corruption of man in Genesis chapter three. Our human bodies and spirits are created simultaneously, but our spirits and bodies are redeemed at separate times. At our conversion, our spirits are reborn. We become, as 2 Corinthians five says, “a new creation.” Our spirits are regenerated. Our heart of stone was removed and we were given a heart of flesh. The breath of life was breathed into the dry, dead bones of our spirit and we lived. Now at the return of Christ, our redemption will be complete when our bodies are resurrected. And at the end of time, the heavens and earth will be recreated.

Is there continuity between the present heavens and earth and the eventual new heavens and earth? No there is not. 1 Peter 3:10 says, *The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.* The present will be destroyed and the new will be created. There is no continuity between the old and the new. But as I said before, there is continuity between our present and future existence. Unlike the heavens and earth, we are not destroyed by fire and recreated, but rather our spirits are reborn and then our bodies will be resurrected. Our spirits are alive instead of dead and our bodies will be glorified instead of natural, but it will still be us.

Understanding this puts a high degree of importance on our physical bodies, much more so that many religions and much more than the church in Corinth was practicing. They did not understand that our literal bodies would be resurrected and because of that, they believed that whatever was done in the body was of no consequence. Sexual immorality and other things could not affect them because their body was separate from their spirit. But this is not acceptable for the believer. Our bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit. In Romans six Paul warns us not to “offer the parts of our body to sin, as instruments of wickedness.”

But some will no doubt wonder, if the resurrection of our bodies is the completion of our redemption, what happens to us immediately after we die? Do we float around as spirits? Yes, in one sense. We will not have physical bodies, but the important thing is that we will go immediately to be with Jesus. We all know what Jesus said to the newly converted thief on the cross. “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.” In Philippians 1:23 Paul confessed his true desire. “I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far.” 2 Cor. 5:8 assures us “I... would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.” There is no such thing as purgatory. There is no such thing as soul sleep. When Christians die, they immediately are in the presence of the Lord. However, let me ask you a question—when is death swallowed up in victory? One of the most famous passages in Scripture has to be verses 54-56. *“Death has been swallowed up in victory. “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. This passage is read at most funerals and has given comfort to untold numbers of believers. But when will this happen? Verse 54 tells us. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” Isn’t this a little different than what we are used to? I usually think of this verse as applying to our death and entrance into heaven, but the text specifically says, When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, **then the saying that is written will come true.***

Obviously, our suffering ends at death and we are in the glorious presence of Christ, but our redemption is still not complete at that point. We catch an interesting glimpse behind the veil of heaven in Revelation 6.

*When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, “**How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?**”*

Do you recognize the cry of their hearts? *How long, O Lord?* This is the cry of the psalmist and prophet that longs for justice to be complete and the enemies of God to be silenced. Take a quick look at these Scriptures.

How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart? -Psalm 13:2

O Lord, ***how long*** will you look on? Rescue my life from their ravages, my precious life from these lions. -Psalm 35:17

My soul is in anguish. ***How long***, O LORD, how long? -Psalm 6:3

How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? - Psalm 13:1

How long will the enemy mock you, O God? -Psalm 74:10

How long, O LORD? Will you hide yourself forever? -Psalm 89:46

How long will the wicked, O LORD, how long will the wicked be jubilant? -Psalm 94:3

How long must your servant wait? When will you punish my persecutors? -Psalm 119:84

How long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled...? -Daniel 8:13

How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled? -Daniel 12:6

How long, O LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen? -Habakkuk 1:2

We can understand why these OT people asked the question, “*How long, O Lord?*” because we can feel their pain and expectation. But those speaking in Revelation no longer are experiencing the pain of this world. They no longer have restraints of their fallen, physical bodies. They are in the presence of Christ and enjoy his fellowship. But despite all of these amazing benefits, they still cry out, “*How long, Sovereign Lord. How can this be? In one sense they don’t seem content even though they are with Christ. Notice what they are longing for. “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?”* They are longing for the complete reign of Christ. Even though they call him Sovereign Lord, because he is, as long as the enemies of God remain in existence, God’s full reign is not yet complete. If you read over the OT examples I just gave you I think you will see that they shared this same longing. Sometimes you will see them longing for pain and suffering to be taken away, but the majority of them are longing for God’s enemies to be judged and his full reign to be complete.

But for most of us, when we think of eternity, we usually think of the things that will benefit us the most—the absence of pain and suffering, etc. But how many of us have the same longing as these saints in Revelation? It’s OK to desire an absence of suffering, but it is even better to desire Christ’s complete reign, because that is what brings him the greatest glory. And whatever brings him the greatest glory is also for our greatest good. All of these things are the completion of our redemption. At Christ’s return we will receive our glorified bodies, death will be swallowed up in victory and Christ’s enemies will be judged. All of these things can happen only because of the resurrection. This is what our bodies and souls groan for. This is why we celebrate. This is why we remember. And this is why we wait for his return.

For a visual reminder as you plant your flower and vegetable gardens this Spring, let every seed that you plant in the ground be another reminder of our natural bodies that will be sown and raised imperishable.

Let me close the way Paul closed this passage. *Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.*

Rich Maurer
April 4, 2010

¹ The rest of the museum certainly made up for this “accidental gospel presentation” as we were treated to the usual plethora of in your face evolution and atheistic assumptions. By far the most egregious part of the museum was the movie titled, *Arabia*, that was produced by two different Islamic Studies organizations. It was an unadulterated propaganda film about the glory and peacefulness of Islam.

^a Gen. 2:7

^c Isaiah 25:8

^d Hosea 13:14