

Change of the Living (Ed's notes)

By Ed Stevens -- Garretttsville Seminar -- Sept. 16-17, 2011

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INTRODUCTION:

There are two other things that were supposed to happen in connection with the Resurrection of the dead: (1) the Change of the Living, and (2) the Catching Up to be with Christ. Let's look at the change of the living.

I. CHANGE OF THE LIVING (FROM MORTAL TO IMMORTAL)

1. The Collective Body View tends to put all of its resurrection focus on the conversion experience and its "dying with" and "rising with" Christ. But their dying and rising with Christ spiritually and covenantally was only the pledge of their inheritance, not the reality of it. We can see that more clearly in the case of Adam and Eve. The death of the sacrificial lamb on their behalf was only a pledge of their actual inheritance to be given later at the resurrection and judgment. The full inheritance was to go to Heaven in their new immortal bodies. That fullness would only be given to those who had "**died with**" the Lamb and had "**put on**" his life. This resurrection would not come until the Parousia, when the dead disembodied souls of those who "died with the Lamb" would be raised out of Sheol and "put on" their new skins that were like the immortal body of the Lamb. What most people miss here, is that both the living and dead saints would receive their new immortal bodies at the Parousia and go to heaven. The new immortal bodies were not just given to the resurrected dead saints. The same kind of immortal body and entrance into heaven was given to all those who were in Christ, whether living or dead. Let's look at the texts which show that the living were changed also:
2. **1 John 3:2** -- "we shall be like Him" -- John tells those who would still be alive at time of the Parousia that they would be changed to "be like Him", because they would "see him as he is ... when He appears."
3. **The Individual Body View of 1 Cor. 15:50-54**: Note what Paul says in verse 50, "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom" (flesh and blood or corruptible bodies cannot inherit incorruption, immortality, nor dwell in heaven) -- This means that the corruptible mortal bodies of the living saints would either have to die at the Parousia, or be changed in order to get their new bodies. In verse 51, Paul clearly decides in favor of the "change" idea, since he says that not all of those alive at the time he is writing (AD 57) would die. Some of them standing there would still be alive at the time Christ returned. In verse 52 he says that the dead would be raised (and receive their new bodies), while **the living would be changed** (into their new bodies). When was this resurrection and change going to occur? "in a moment, in the twinkling of eye, at the last trump." The change would not occur at their death years later. It would occur instantaneously at the Last Trumpet. Therefore, the

living saints would not have to die to receive their new bodies. Their mortal corruptible bodies would be changed into incorruptible immortal bodies. This change of bodies would occur at the moment (twinkling of an eye) when they "put on" incorruption and immortality. Notice verses 53 and 54 where he says that the corruptible and mortal bodies would "put on" on incorruption and immortality. Question: Is this talking about the resurrected dead putting on their new bodies, or is it talking about the living saints putting on their new bodies? How can we know which it is? Easy. The dead disembodied souls did not have a body to be changed. They were not in a corruptible mortal body, so Paul cannot be talking about the dead here in verses 53 and 54. He is talking about the living who still had their corruptible mortal bodies, which needed to be changed by putting on incorruption and immortality. So, verses 53 and 54 are talking about what would happen to the living at the Parousia. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the disembodied dead souls would be raised out of Hades and given their new bodies, then the living would have their corruptible mortal bodies changed by putting on incorruption and immortality. Paul says even more about this change of the living in his second letter to these same Corinthians. Flip over a few pages to 2 Cor. 5:1ff.

4. **2 Cor. 5:1-4** -- In chapter 4, Paul had talked about the persecution that they were suffering in their "earthen vessels" (4:7) which was referring to their individual mortal bodies (4:10-11). Then notice what he promises to those saints at Corinth who would be alive at the time of the Parousia: the dead would be raised and the living would be presented together with the dead to Christ. Now think about that. How were the living going to be presented to Christ right along with the resurrected dead? He hints at it in verse 4:18 (in the unseen realm). But how are the living going to get into the unseen realm with the resurrected dead without dying? This is the question that chapter five answers. In 2 Cor. 5:1, Paul says that those whose bodies were killed in the persecution already had a body waiting for them in heaven. Then in verse 2 he says that even while still alive in their present bodies the living saints were groaning under the persecution, longing to have their new bodies "put on over" their old ones. This is the Greek word EP-ENDUO, which means to put on over the top of, without taking off the old body first. Then in verse 3, he shows that this is what he means when he says that this "putting on over" does not result in disembodiment (nakedness). When the living put their new immortal bodies on over the top of their old mortal bodies, they do not have to take their old bodies off first and become disembodied before they put on their new bodies! Do you realize how utterly mind-boggling this is! But it gets even more amazing in verse 4, where he explains what is happening when the new body is put on over the top of the old body. And this verse uses that same Greek word EP-ENDUO (used in verse 2), which means to put on over the top of the existing clothing. Here Paul reiterates the fact that he is talking about living saints when he says that "while we are in this tent." That is speaking of living people still in their mortal bodies, and suffering persecution. They were burdened and groaning in the persecution, NOT because they wanted to die and get it over with, but rather because they wanted to remain alive until they could be "clothed upon" with their new bodies, without having to take the old bodies off first. Then he says that when

the new bodies were "put on over the top of" their old bodies, the mortality of the old body would be swallowed up by the life or immortality of the new body. They were changed into immortal without having to die physically. And this "putting on" is a reference to the same "putting on" that we find in 1 Cor 15:52-54, which is likewise talking about the change that happens to the living who are still in their mortal, corruptible bodies. They put the new bodies on over the top of their old ones, so that the old ones are changed, and their mortality is swallowed up by the immortality that is put on over the top of it. *This is profound beyond words. Once you see this, it will bless your socks off. What a reward the living saints got when Christ returned! The dead were raised and the living were changed.* But we are still not through with the change idea. There is one more text in Phil. 3:20-21 that we need to look at.

5. **Phil. 3:20-21** -- Note what verse 21 says: [Jesus] "will transform our lowly body into conformity with His glorious body." This is talking about a bodily change which would occur at the Parousia. This is the same idea we saw in 1 Jn. 3:2, where John said that when Christ appeared, the living would become like Him. And this is the same Apostle Paul who taught this same bodily change idea in his two letters to the Corinthians, which were written six years earlier (AD 57) just before Paul was arrested and sent to Rome. This letter to the Philippians was written in AD 63 just before Paul was released from that imprisonment in Rome. The transformation here in Phil. 3:21 is obviously talking about the living saints, since the ones getting the change were still in their lowly bodies. They were not dead and disembodied. They still had their old bodies on, and those old lowly bodies were going to be transformed to become like Christ's glorious body.

Another point that we do not want to miss here, is that the living do not have two bodies simultaneously. They are not a dynamic duo. The old body is changed into the new body, so that they only have one body at a time. According to 1 Cor. 15:52, that change occurs instantly "in a moment in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump" so that there is no overlap. There is no moment when they had both bodies at the same time. The change from one to the other was instantaneous. It was not a long-drawn-out process over a period of days, weeks, or years. The change occurred "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump".

Now I can just see the Collective Body advocates waving a red flag here, and reminding us that Paul is using a plural possessive pronoun ("our") with a singular noun ("body"), thus indicating that Paul is talking about a collective body being transformed. This is the flagship text of the Collective Body View. They rest their case on this plural pronoun and singular noun combination. They assert that this is talking about the church as a collective body being transformed at the Parousia, and that it cannot mean a group of living individuals each undergoing their own individual bodily changes.

However, if I said, "When **we** get to heaven **we** will get a new **body**," would you understand that I was referring to each of us getting his own new body, or would

you think I meant that when we all go to heaven as a collective group, we will all be a part of only one new collective body that we share in common, like the BORG collective in Star Trek? I suspect you would rightly understand me as meaning that each of us will get his or her own new individual body to dwell in heaven with. And that seems to be the same way Paul is using this language here in Phil. 3:21.

So, if we can find examples of this grammatical construction in contexts where it is clearly talking about each individual in a group having their own individual bodies, then the Collective Body argument for this text collapses. Using my computer Bible search software (Accordance for the Macintosh) I was able to find several examples of this very construction. Paul used this idiomatic expression often in his writings. Here are a few examples:

Rom. 8:16 The Spirit Himself testifies with **our spirit** that we are children of God,

Rom. 8:23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of **our body**.

Rom. 8:26 In the same way the Spirit also helps **our weakness**; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words;

1 Cor. 15:14 and if Christ has not been raised, then **our preaching** is vain, your faith also is vain.

2 Cor. 1:12 For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of **our conscience**, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you.

2 Cor. 4:10 always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in **our body**.

2 Cor. 5:1 For we know that if the earthly tent which is **our house** is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

2 Cor. 5:2 For indeed in this *house* we groan, longing to be clothed with **our dwelling** from heaven,

2 Cor. 6:11 **Our mouth** has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide.

2 Cor. 9:3 But I have sent the brethren, in order that **our boasting** about you may not be made empty in this case, so that, as I was saying, you may be prepared;

1 Thess. 1:5 for **our gospel** did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

2 Thess. 1:10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for **our testimony** to you was believed.

2 Thess. 2:14 It was for this He called you through **our gospel**, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I asked a Full Preterist Greek scholar [Dr. David Warren, Amridge University, Montgomery, Alabama] what the Greek grammars call this phenomenon when the plural possessive personal pronoun is used with a singular noun. Here is his reply:

You should look in the index of the grammar of your choice under the head term “number.” Usually you will find this subject under “Number, Concord/Agreement in” and then under the exceptions that follow. For Robertson’s large grammar, see pp. 403–409; for Blass and Debrunner, see pp. 73–76; for Wallace, see pp. 399–406. Robertson calls these exceptions “idiomatic plurals” or conversely “idiomatic singulars.” Blass and Debrunner prefer the term *constructio ad sensum* (Latin = “construction according to the sense”). As for Wallace, he uses several categories (which is a typical distinguishing mark of all his comments): “collective singular subjects,” “compound subjects,” “indefinite plurals,” and “categorical plurals.”

6. Here are some comments from Tim Warner and Roger Samsel (a couple of futurist critics of the collective body view of Sam Frost) back in 2003 when Frost was still a Full Preterist:

[TIM WARNER] [Some] Preterists typically claim that the use of the singular "body" (who shall change our vile body) with the plural personal pronoun (our) indicates Paul was referring to the collective body of believers, "our" (plural) being all believers, and "body" (singular) being the collective whole. This explanation, however, cannot be correct on two counts. First, while "body" is [sometimes] used metaphorically in reference to the Church, it is ALWAYS Christ's body, NEVER OUR body. Further, "vile body" cannot refer to the Church prior to AD 70, because elsewhere Paul calls the pre-AD70 church Christ's body. And Christ's body is not "vile." The only alternative is that Paul was referring to the individual body of flesh....

Secondly, the Preterist explanation [collective body view] is not grammatically correct. The use of the singular "body" with the plural genitive personal pronoun (our) does not mean a collective body. Rather, it is intended to emphasize the application to each and every "body" within his target audience. Consider the following passages:

2 Cor 4:8-11

- 8 WE (plural) are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; WE (plural) are perplexed, but not in despair;
- 9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;
- 10 Always bearing about in THE BODY (singular) the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in OUR (plural) BODY (singular).
- 11 For WE (plural) which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in OUR (plural) MORTAL FLESH (singular). (KJV)

The last two words ("our body") in verse 10 in Greek are "tō somati hēmōn." "To" is the definite article. "somati" is the word "body"; it is singular in this case. "Hemon" is the first person plural genitive personal pronoun (our). Literally, it is "the body belonging to us." But notice that the context [2 Cor 4:7-12] clearly refers to Paul and his companions' physical sufferings for the sake of Christ. "Body" (singular) here is used of each of their bodies, NOT a collective "body" of people. In Phil 3:21, it is exactly the same: "to soma" (the body) "hemon" (belonging to us). This construction with the use of the definite article refers to each and every body (singular) of us (plural). It does NOT refer to a single body of which all are a part. Here is an example from Jesus:

Matt 6:25

- 25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for YOUR (plural) LIFE (singular), what YE (plural) shall eat, or what YE (plural) shall drink; nor yet for YOUR (plural) BODY (singular), what YE (plural) shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? (KJV)

Since Jesus did not expect the collective Church to wear clothes, He obviously was referring to each and every one in his target audience. In the Greek, Jesus said, "to somati umon" (the body of yours). The only difference here is Jesus used the second person pronoun (your - not including Himself) while Paul used the first person pronoun (our - including himself). The important point being that the singular "body" with the definite article combined with the plural personal pronoun ("your" or "our"), does NOT refer to a COLLECTIVE body consisting of many individuals, but to EACH and every "body" belonging to each those included in the personal pronoun. It is the difference between "each" and "all." Here is another example from Paul.

1 Cor 6:18-20

- 18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without THE BODY (singular); but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own BODY (singular).
- 19 What? know ye not that YOUR (plural) BODY (singular) is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in YOU (plural), which YE (plural) have of God, and YE (plural) are not your own?
- 20 For YE (plural) are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in YOUR (plural) BODY (singular), and in YOUR (plural) SPIRIT (singular), which are God's. (KJV)

Here is another example:

1 Thess 5:23

23 And the very God of peace sanctify YOU (plural) wholly; and I pray God YOUR (plural) whole SPIRIT (singular) and SOUL (singular) and BODY (singular) be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (KJV)

As is very obvious, Paul, speaking collectively to the whole church, uses plural personal pronouns. Yet, because his words are meant to be individually applied, he also speaks to each and every one using singular nouns, like "body," "soul," and "spirit."

Therefore, it is obvious that in Phil 3:21, Paul does NOT mean that the "vile body" is a collective "body" of people. He uses the term precisely as in the above examples, speaking to the whole group collectively, about each and every one of them and their own "body."

It is true that sometimes Paul uses a plural noun when referring to each of their bodies, spirits, etc. But, it seems that Paul typically chose to use the singular when he wanted to emphasize the certainness of application to each and every individual in his audience. When he merely wanted to refer to the whole group without such specific emphasis, he used the plural noun. For more examples of plural genitive personal pronouns with singular nouns, cf. **Rom. 6:19, Rom. 8:16, Rom. 8:23, Rom. 12:2, 2 Cor. 1:12, 2 Cor. 4:16, 2 Cor. 5:1-2, 2 Cor. 6:11, 2 Cor. 7:5, Eph. 2:3, Gal. 6:13, Gal. 6:18, Eph. 4:29, Eph. 5:19, Eph. 6:5, Col. 2:13, Col. 3:3, Col. 3:8, 1 Thess. 2:17, Heb. 9:14, Heb. 12:9, James 5:3, 1 Pet. 1:13, 1 John 3:20-21.** These passages use the same kind of construction as Phil. 3:21, yet in each case it is obvious that the singular noun applies to each and every person within his target audience. In none of them does he use the singular noun to refer to the whole collective group.

[ROGER SAMSEL] Your [Tim Warner] reasoning on the plural personal possessive pronouns with the singular "body" is very correct in my opinion and the examples you cited for comparison are overwhelming evidence to support your conclusion. I noticed something else when I was going over the passages you cited. Phil 3:21 is translated this way in Young's Literal Translation:

"Who shall transform the body of our humiliation to its becoming conformed to the body of his glory..."

What does "our vile body" (KJV), "our lowly body" (NKJV) or "the body of our humiliation" (YLT) mean? The word "humiliation," is the noun form of the verb found in Phil 2:8, "He HUMBLED himself..." speaking of Christ's emptying of Himself to take upon Himself human flesh. It does not mean "vile" in the sense of "wicked." It means "lowly," "of low rank," and "humble." In Phil 2:8 it expressly

refers to Christ's taking upon Himself human form and became obedient to the point of physical death:

Phil. 2:5-11

5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,
6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,
7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.
8 And being found in appearance as a man, He **HUMBLED** Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.
9 Therefore God also has **highly exalted Him** and given Him the name which is above every name,
10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,
11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the **glory** of God the Father.

Just as the body of His humiliation was exalted, so Paul says [within the context of this same book of Philippians] the body of our humiliation will also be transformed to its becoming conformed to His glorified body. This is critical. Since "He humbled Himself" [Phil. 2:8] refers to Christ's taking on human flesh, then "our humiliation" in Phil 3:21 **clearly refers to our physical humanity** [not some status of the collective body of the church]. It means our flesh and blood body that is subject to death. This being the case, there is no getting around the fact that our body's "being conformed to the body of His glory" must find its explanation in the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave. "...knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him." (Rom 6:9) [bracketed and boldface clarifications are mine, ees]

Ed's Concluding Thoughts on Phil. 3:21 and the Bodily Change of the Living --

The point we want to emphasize here is that the "change" of the living saints was an **individual bodily change** which occurred to those saints who were still alive at the time of the Parousia. This bodily change occurred "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump" (1 Cor. 15:51-54). After the change of their bodies, those living saints were no longer in the visible realm. It was like Enoch -- one second he was there, the next second he had vanished into the unseen realm. However, it is not clear what kind of bodily form Enoch had after he was taken into the unseen realm, nor to which part of the heavenly unseen realm he was taken. The book of Enoch can probably answer those questions. The living were changed into their new immortal bodies and translated (like Enoch) to the unseen realm where the resurrected dead were also. We might also note here that this "change" of the living is the very kind of change that would have occurred to Adam and Eve if they had not sinned. They would not have died, but instead would have "put on" immortality at the successful end of their testing, and then dwelt in heaven with God forever afterwards.

There is one more resurrection text we need to look at, which tells the rest of the story about what happened to all those dead and living saints who were raised and changed at the Parousia. That text is 1 Thess. 4:13-17. Since I have already explained that text in a separate PDF, you can simply get that PDF from me by email request. The PDF file is labeled, "1 Thess. 4 explanation" and the article inside is entitled, "Exposition of 1 Thess. 4:13-7."

In previous sessions, we noticed that in the previous context of 2 Cor 5:1-4, there is a clear indication that Paul is talking about the individual bodies of the living saints, and not a collective body:

2 Cor 4:8-11

8 WE (plural) are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; **WE** (plural) are perplexed, but not in despair;
9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;
10 Always bearing about in **THE BODY** (singular) the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in **OUR (plural) BODY (singular)**.
11 For **WE** (plural) which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in **OUR (plural) MORTAL FLESH (singular)**. (KJV)

These verses are clearly talking about the persecution that Paul and his fellow-workers were suffering in their physical bodies at that time. Notice that Paul is using the very same words and phrases that we find in Rom. 8:23 and Phil 3:21 about the transformation, change, or redemption of their bodies that would occur at the Parousia. He was referring to those saints who would live and remain until the Parousia. Their bodies would be changed, transformed, or redeemed by Christ at the Parousia.

Here is another example:

1 Thess 5:23

23 And the very God of peace sanctify YOU (plural) wholly; and I pray God YOUR (plural) whole SPIRIT (singular) and SOUL (singular) and BODY (singular) be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (KJV)

Why was Paul so concerned about the bodies of those living saints remaining alive and well until the Parousia? If they were not going to even know that the Parousia had occurred, nor be affected in any cognitive way by that Parousia, why all the fuss here about their physical bodies being preserved complete until the Parousia? Could it be that he was praying for them to stay safe and stay alive until the Parousia, so that they could receive the bodily change and rapture without having to die in the persecution and be temporarily disembodied?