

# “Our Body” – Collective or Individual?

Resurrection Series (Part 6)

*By Ed Stevens -- Then and Now Podcast -- Sept 22, 2013*

## INTRODUCTION:

- A. Here we go for another study of the Resurrection from a full preterist perspective.
- B. Last time we dealt with that perpetual nagging question that futurists relentlessly pester us with, i.e., *"Why weren't the physical bodies of the saints raised out of the graves in AD 70?"* That study generated some excellent feedback from several listeners, some of whom I have not heard from in a long time. That is always nice to see old friends join us here on the podcast and share their feedback.
- C. This session we will be dealing with the phrase “our body” which is found in Phil. 3:21. This is one of the flagship texts used by Collective Body advocates to support their concept of the Resurrection of a collective body in AD 70.
- D. Before we get into that study, let's pray --  
Our Heavenly Father, who sent Your Son to rescue us from eternal death and give us eternal life in your Holy Presence. Help us in this study of Phil. 3:21 to clearly discern your truth, so that we can have full assurance of faith about what your Word teaches about the Resurrection and the afterlife. It is in the Name of Jesus that we pray. Amen.

Here is the text we will be dealing with. You will want to have your Bible open here:

*For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform **our lowly body** that it may be **conformed to His glorious body**, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.*  
[Phil. 3:20-21 NKJV]

## A Little Background History First

I had the blessing (or curse?) of being on different sides of the fence regarding the resurrection at one time or another during my 38-year tenure as a Full Preterist (1975-2013). So I understand where both views are coming from, and how they interpret the various resurrection texts within their respective paradigms. I was in close contact with Max King in the late 1970's and 1980's at the very time he was developing the CBV and writing his book about it (*The Cross and the Parousia of Christ*, 1987).

I still remember sitting in Max King's living room back in 1978 and asking him what text he based his "collective body" concept on. He immediately went to Phil. 3:21 as being the clearest reference to a collective body resurrection:

*For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform **our lowly body** that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.*  
[Phil. 3:20-21 NKJV]

I was surprised by his assertion that the phrase “our lowly body” was referring to a collective body. He noted that the word “our” is plural, while the word “body” is singular, thus referring to one collective body made up of a group of individuals. Max noted that Paul is using a plural possessive pronoun (“our”) with a singular noun (“body”), allegedly 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 or resurrected at the Parousia, and that it cannot mean a group of living individuals each undergoing their own individual bodily changes, because Paul spoke Koine Greek fluently and would not have used this particular grammatical construction unless he intended to talk about a collective body.

I had never heard anyone take that approach before. I was not ready to accept that without more careful grammatical and contextual analysis. I went back to my office and tore that passage apart in the Greek. I looked up all the similar verses that have both “body” (sing-neut-acc) and “our” (plur-gen) in them. I noticed that there were some passages which used this same construction in a collective sense, but also that there was a significant number of texts which used it in an individual sense. I looked at all the NT texts which have plural possessive pronouns (e.g., “our”) modifying singular nouns (e.g., “body” or “soul” or “spirit”) to see if there were any of them that were speaking of individuals rather than a collective concept. I found several of them. Then I began to notice that we use this same way of talking in English also. I found that the NT writers often used this construction in connection with both individuals and collectives.

That was confusing. Which is the correct sense that Paul was using it here in Phil. 3:21? Was Paul talking about a collective body (the Church), or was he simply referring to a group of saints there in Philippi in the first century, each of whom had their own individual “body”? I struggled with Max's interpretation for several years. It always seemed “forced” to me, in spite of the “seeming” grammatical support for it.

Since the Greek morphology could be interpreted either way (individually or collectively), it was hard to nail down decisively and convincingly. However, I knew both interpretations could not be correct. Paul certainly was not teaching both concepts in this text. It had to be one or the other. So I kept studying it. I knew that Phil. 3:21 is a key text, no matter what view of the resurrection we hold, so I was determined to finally get a handle on it. And I knew that it could only be decided by a careful re-examination of the context.

During the first fifteen years of my full preterist career (1975-1990), I leaned toward the Collective Body View, but always had nagging doubts about it, like this particular interpretation of Phil. 3:21. Then in 1990 I heard about the Battle for the Resurrection that was being fought between Norman Geisler and Murray Harris. I immediately bought Murray Harris' book (*From Grave to Glory*, 1990). I was intrigued by his individual body approach to the various resurrection texts, including Phil. 3:21. I slowly began backing

away from the Collective Body View. Then in 1993, Max King was invited to present his CBV to a dozen or so Reformed theologians in Orlando for their evaluation. The speeches at that *Covenant Eschatology Symposium* were recorded, and the MP3 audio tracks are available from the IPA website.

Two of the Reformed theologians there at that symposium presented papers that strongly challenged Max's Collective Body View (i.e., Dr. Robert Strimple and Dr. Charles Hill). Strimple analyzed it from an *exegetical-redemptive* perspective, while Hill used a *historical-theological* approach. Both did a fair job of pointing out the weaknesses that they perceived in all Full Preterist explanations of the resurrection, but focused their main critique on King's CBV. Those two papers were expanded and republished in Keith Mathison's critique book (*When Shall These Things Be?* 2004). After listening to their 1993 speeches I was stunned. They verbalized some of the same problems that I was having with the Collective Body view. That is when I finally backed away from it permanently.

### **What do we call this particular grammatical construction?**

I asked a Full Preterist Greek scholar [Dr. David Warren, Faulkner University, Montgomery, Alabama] what the Greek grammars call this phenomenon when the first person plural possessive pronoun "our" is used with the singular noun "body." 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."

Now let's take a closer look at this particular grammatical construction (the plural possessive pronoun *our* modifying the singular noun *body*) as it is used here in Phil 3:21 and its context. We need to have our Bibles open to Philippians 3:21, as we study the context before and after this verse.

### **Plural "our" with singular "body" argument (Phil. 3:21)**

We are trying to discover which kind of "body" was transformed at the Parousia? Was Paul talking about a collective body or individual bodies being transformed?

**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. Apostle Paul had already taught this same bodily change idea in

his two letters to the Corinthians (1 Cor 15:51-54 and 2 Cor 5:1-4), which were written six years earlier (AD 57-58) 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. So, this concept of bodily change or bodily transformation was not new. Paul had already been teaching it for at least six years.

This kind of bodily change is the same idea we find in 1 Jn. 3:2, where John says that when Christ appeared at His Parousia, the living saints would become like Him. So, Paul is not the only one who taught a bodily change or transformation at the Parousia.

Before looking more closely at Phil. 3:21, we need to survey the preceding context to see if it offers any clues about what kind of body Paul is talking about here. Two verses will suffice for now. Notice verses 19 and 20 in particular:

*...whose [plural] end [singular] is destruction, whose [plural] god [singular] is the belly, and whose [plural] glory [singular] is in their [plural] shame [singular] — who the things on earth are minding. For our [plural] citizenship [singular] is in the heavens, whence also a Saviour we await — the Lord Jesus Christ [Phil. 3:19-20 YLT]*

Not just once, twice, or three times, but **five times** in the preceding two verses Paul uses a plural possessive pronoun with a singular noun. That is the same construction we are looking at in verse 21. Yet here in verse 19 it is easy to see that Paul is using this language in an individual sense – NOT collective! Notice that each of the “whose” would have their own end, their own belly, their own glory, and their own shame. It was not a collective ownership of those things. Each of the individuals in that group had their own end, god, glory, and shame. Verse 20 is even clearer (if that is possible) when it says “our citizenship.” Each of the individual saints were citizens of the heavenly kingdom. Here is the same construction that we find in verse 21, a plural possessive pronoun used with a singular noun, referring to a group of individuals, each of whom possess one of the items mentioned, not just a share in a collective ownership.

Do you catch the power of this? Five times in the preceding two verses Paul used this same construction in an individual sense. That is pretty devastating to the Collective Body interpretation of Phil. 3:21. But wait, there’s more. We are just getting started.

Notice in the subsequent context at Phil. 4:5 that it says, "Let **your gentleness** be known to all men. The Lord is near." The "your" here is plural, while the "gentleness" is singular. Each of the individuals in the group were exhorted to have a gentle spirit.

Over a decade ago, Walt Hibbard was asked to comment on Phil 3:21, and his argument for an individual application of it was drawn from the surrounding context. Here is what he said about it:

I believe that Paul is talking about individual body resurrection, not a corporate or collective resurrection. Here is my thinking: The context in vs. 17-19 seems to be speaking of individual people, for example, the phrase in vs. 18 ("for many walk"). In vs. 17 he points out "those who so walk" as referring to individuals, not a composite group although

there may indeed be many people bearing that description. It is focused, seems to me, on individuals. Then in vs. 20 Paul strikes a contrast between those people mentioned in vs. 17-19 by the words "**our citizenship** is in heaven." He is including himself in with a group of faithful servants of Christ, real people, who together are "eagerly wait(ing)" for the coming of the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Again, these are individuals. And in vs. 21, it is the same group as mentioned in vs. 20 who will experience a transformation of their lowly bodies in order to conform them to His glorious body.

It is not hard to find several more examples of this grammatical construction in contexts where it is clearly talking about each individual in a group having their own individual copy of this singular item. Using my computer Bible search program I was able to find several examples of this very construction. Paul used this idiomatic expression the most, but there were others who used it as well. Notice the words in each of these verses that I have put in **RED**. Look up these texts in your Bible and study their surrounding verses to feel the force of this contextual argument. There are more texts like these, but these are some of the clearest and easiest to see.

**Luke 6:22** Blessed are you when men hate YOU [plural] , and ostracize YOU [plural] , and cast insults at YOU [plural] , and spurn **YOUR [plural] NAME [singular]** as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man.

**Rom. 6:6** knowing this, that **OUR [plural] old SELF [singular]** was crucified with Him, that OUR [plural] BODY [singular] of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin;

**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;

**Phil. 3:20** For **our citizenship** is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;

**Phil. 3:21** who will transform **our lowly body** into conformity with His glorious body, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

**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.

**1 Th. 2:17** But we, brethren, having been bereft of you for a short while in person, not in spirit were all the more eager with great desire to see **YOUR [plural] FACE [singular]**.

**1 Th. 5:23** Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify YOU [plural] entirely; and may **YOUR [plural] SPIRIT [singular] and SOUL [singular] and BODY [singular]** be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**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.

**Rev. 13:16** And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on **THEIR [plural] right HAND [singular]**, or on **THEIR [plural] FOREHEAD [singular]**,

**James 3:3** Now if we put the bits into the horses mouths so that they may obey us, we direct **THEIR [plural] entire BODY [singular]** as well.

**James 3:6** And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of **OUR [plural] LIFE [singular]**, and is set on fire by hell.

Can you spot any texts which use the singular noun as a collective ownership, versus those which use it as an individual ownership? Several of these are claimed as

collective usages by the Collective Body folks. However, none of them has to be understood collectively. All of them can just as easily be understood in an individual sense.

Notice the three uses in Romans 8 (vv. 16, 23, 26). The Collective Body advocates claim Rom. 8:23 as a collective usage, but ignore the two similar uses before and after it in the context. The other two uses in verse 16 and 26 are clearly referring to individuals who each had the Spirit within them who testified with their **individual spirits** and helped their **individual weaknesses**. And if the two similar constructions on either side of Rom. 8:23 are clearly individual applications, it means that Rom. 8:23 is most likely an individual application as well, especially since just twelve verses earlier in the context verse 11 has the construction "**your [plural] mortal bodies [plural]**" (using "**bodies**" plural). Note the plural possessive pronoun used with a plural "bodies" this time. Here there is no doubt that Paul is talking about individual bodies, and NOT a collective body. With verse 11 ("your mortal bodies") in the context, it becomes extremely tenuous to claim that verse 23 ("our body") is used in a collective sense. That would make verse 23 out of sync with its context (verses 11, 16, and 26).

The various commentaries on Phil. 3:20-21 explain the usage of "body" (singular) with the plural possessive pronoun "our" as a common grammatical form for all Biblical writers, especially Apostle Paul. It was also common in the external Koine Greek writings of the first century. This casts even more doubt upon the Collective Body argument here in Phil 3:21, by showing that it can easily be talking about each individual in the group "our" having his own individual "body." There is nothing about this grammatical construction which demands a collective body application in Phil 3:21. There are too many exceptions to the rule, especially right here in the context. So it appears that this text is another one of those exceptions to the general rule that adjectives agree in number with their modified nouns.

In my book, *Expectations Demand A First Century Rapture*, I show that this text (Phil. 3:21) is referring to the same "bodily change" (1 Cor. 15:51-54) or the "putting on immortality" (1 Cor. 15:52-54 and 2 Cor. 5:1-4) or the "redemption of the body" (Rom. 8:23) that is spoken of in other texts. When those who "lived and remained until the Parousia" (1 Thess. 4:15) were "caught up" to meet the Lord in the air, their physical bodies were transformed and changed to "be like Him" (1 Jn. 3:2). Phil. 3:21 is merely another reference to that same bodily change or transformation that occurred at Christ's Parousia.

In Parker Voll's speech at our 2011 Garrettsville preterist seminar, he commented on the meaning of Phil 3:21. Parker Voll is a full preterist, with an earned Masters degree in theology, who writes articles ("The Greek Column") for *Fulfilled Magazine*. His lesson at the seminar was on the topic of bodily change as taught in four particular texts: 1 Cor 15:51-54; 2 Cor 5:1-4; Phil 3:21; and 1 Jn 3:2. Here is what he said about Phil 3:21 –

**Phil 3:20-21:** For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. (NASB)

This text combines many of the elements from all of the previous texts we have looked at. Namely, that the bodies of the saints to whom Paul was writing were expected to be “transformed” to become like Christ’s body when he arrived from his heavenly abode as Savior. This idea is similar to what we see in 1 John 3:2, but is also supported in 1 Cor 15. The verb describing the “transformation” in this passage is different than our other verses (Gk. *metaschematizo*). This verb focuses on the idea of an *outer change*, so that the inner person remains intact. This harmonizes with the usage in our 2 Cor 5 text, where Paul, in using the verb “clothe upon” [Gk. *ep-endo*] to describe the bodily change, is emphasizing the continuity of the inner person [between those two bodily forms]. Also, we note in this passage that this activity is something that the *Lord* will himself do as an act of power, and that **he does these things in the heavenly realm** (where his “body of glory” resides).

There is a grammatical issue with some translations of verse 21. Many translations translate this as “our lowly body” (ESV), or “the body of our humble estate” (NASB). But I submit that the translations “our weak mortal bodies” (NLT) or “these humble bodies of ours” (NET) are more accurate in that they properly recognize that the normal way a Greek would have wanted to emphasize individual items within a group would be to combine the singular form of the item (“body”) with the plural form of the group (“our”), so in English we should say “our bodies” instead of “our body.” **This is a very common grammatical construction in the New Testament, and there are many examples where this is the only way the construction makes sense.** So it is quite clear that Paul is talking about the particular bodies of the individuals within the Philippian church. **This idea is further supported when we look back at the discussion in Phil 2:8-9 where Paul is talking about Christ moving from lowliness into glory, so that in context Christ then becomes a *prototype* for any of the individual Philippians who similarly choose to humble themselves, indicating what they might expect as a result of their humility.**

Voll has shown in those four texts (1 Cor 15:51-54; 2 Cor 5:1-4; Phil 3:21; and 1 Jn 3:2), that the pre-70 saints who "lived and remained" until the Parousia in AD 70 were expecting to experience a "change" of their individual bodies from mortality to immortality. Notice that Phil 3:21 said that their lowly bodies would be transformed to be like (in conformity with) Christ's glorious body. That sounds like what 1 Jn 3:2 said would happen at the Parousia: "when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is." Do you catch that similarity with Phil 3:21?



Back in the days (2003) when Sam Frost was a Full Preterist and using Phil 3:21 as an example of a Collective Body proof-text, there were a couple of futurist critics who challenged him (Tim Warner and Roger Samsel). Here is the argumentation that they used against the Collective Body application of Phil 3:21 –

**[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 passage:

#### **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 "TO SOMATI HEMON." "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 humon" (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 of 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 **HUMBL**ED 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 **HUMBL**ED 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 it's 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 were added]

## CONCLUSION

I believe we have very effectively shown, through grammatical and contextual analysis, as well as looking at similar texts throughout the New Testament, that the Collective Body application of Phil 3:21 simply cannot be maintained. It depends on the universal application of the grammatical rule for adjectives to match the number of the nouns they modify in every case with no exceptions. As we have seen, there are many exceptions to that rule. Jesus, Paul, James and John all used this grammatical construction in their teaching, which was quite often applied to individuals and not to a collective group.

This means that the bodily transformation that Paul is alluding to here in Phil 3:21 is NOT talking about the collective body of the church being raised out of dead Judaism at the Parousia. Instead, it is talking about individual saints having their lowly mortal bodies CHANGED into glorious immortal bodies like Christ has in heaven now.

According to Paul here in Phil. 3:21, this "bodily transformation" or change was supposed to occur at the Parousia. And it is obviously talking about the living and remaining saints, since the ones getting this "bodily transformation" were still in their lowly bodies. They were not dead and disembodied. It is not talking about the resurrection of the dead disembodied saints. These saints still had their old bodies on, and their old "lowly bodies" were going to be transformed to be like Christ's glorious body.

Another point that we do not want to miss here, is that the living saints did not have both kinds of bodies simultaneously. They were not a dynamic duo. Their old lowly physical bodies were transformed or changed into new glorious spiritual bodies, so that they only had one kind of body at a time. According to 1 Cor. 15:52, that change occurred instantly "in a moment in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump" so that there was no overlap of the two bodies. There was no moment when they had both kinds of bodies at the same time. The change from one to the other was instantaneous at the Parousia. It was not a long-drawn-out process over a period of days, weeks, or years. And, according to Phil. 3:20-21, that bodily transformation of the living saints would occur at the time of Christ's return from heaven, not years later when they finally died.

Well, that will just about do it for this session. I trust that you understood all of this. If not, be sure to send me an email and ask for clarification.

Thanks so much for listening.

## Additional Supporting Material

*From Daniel E. Harden*

On 10/4/13 10:59 PM, "Daniel E. Harden" wrote:

Here is the Leon Morris citation that I mentioned. It's in his commentary on Romans, where he cites Nigel Turner:

Leon Morris, Romans, on "redemption of our body" (Rom 8:23) *The Epistle to the Romans* (A Pillar New Testament Commentary, 1988, Eerdmans), page 324 Footnote 103 reads:

**This is a further example of the use of the singular σώμα [body], of something that is true of each member of a group – a Semitic use, as Turner points out [Grammar-Moulton-Howard-Turner, vol. 3, p. 24].**

**The bibliographic information about Turner is as follows:**

*A Grammar of New Testament Greek, vol. 3, Syntax*, by Nigel Turner (Edinburgh, 1963). Volume 1 is by J. H. Moulton, and the collection is also referred to as Moulton-Howard-Turner's *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, begun by J. H. Moulton in 1906 and finished by Nigel Turner in 1976.

Page 24 is in Chapter Two, titled The Gender and Number of Nouns. He specifically points to the singular used "of a group" in Matt. 6:25 and Luke 12:22; Rom. 8:23; 1 Cor. 6:19,20; 2 Cor. 4:10; and James 3:3, in addition to our text here (Phil. 3:21). He specifically says, regarding using a singular to refer to each member in the group (on page 23):

**Contrary to normal Greek and Latin practice, the NT sometimes follows the Aramaic and Hebrew preference for a *distributive singular*. Something belonging to each person in a group of people is placed in the singular: as in TO SOMA HUMON (1 Cor 6:19), and EN TE KARDIA AUTON (Lk 1:66). On the other hand, the New Testament does frequently exhibit the plural, e.g., KARDIAI (Matt 9:4).**

He then cites "your body" in 1 Cor. 6:19 and "their heart" in Luke 1:66. He then lists a number of nouns that function in this way in the NT, and cites other Semitisms that follow the same pattern. Go to the following link and then to pages 23-25, in which he cites a number of different nouns used this way:

[http://books.google.com/books?id=svsbmuKLNQ8C&pg=PA21&source=gbs\\_toc\\_r&cad=4#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=svsbmuKLNQ8C&pg=PA21&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=4#v=onepage&q&f=false)