

1CO 15:50 "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."

As Paul wraps up this section he is taking what has been primarily a rebuke to these Corinthian believers and is turning it in to both an encouragement and a motivation to consider how they should be living their lives for Christ and why.

I don't think any of us would disagree that the bottom line question for all of us who have trusted in Jesus for our salvation is, are we being conformed into the image of Christ and to what degree is the world able to see Christ in us?

Unlike our unbelieving neighbors we have the opportunity to express the life and love of God who has delivered us from the domain of darkness which held us prisoners to sin and its power. But now we have been completed in Christ and united to the Lord forever to express His glory in this world. This is what Paul brings out in his second letter to these Corinthians.

2CO 4:4-7 "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. 6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. 7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us."

When Paul writes that God said, "Let light shine out of darkness," he is using creation language found in the first chapter of Genesis. And the message is clear. Where there was only darkness God created the light for His glory. And in the same way, where there was only the darkness of sin in our lives He has created a new people in Christ to shine forth to this world for His glory forever.

The fact that we can actually demonstrate this light and glory in jars of clay, or in our earthly bodies, should give us the hope that what the world sees in us is something supernatural and is a power which only God could do in our lives, thus showing the world that the Lord has every intention of working in our lives as ambassadors of light.

But if the light can shine in these earthly tents, as Paul describes our natural bodies in 2Co.5:1, then imagine what He'll do in our resurrected bodies as that power and light of glory is seen in its fullness in our newly created bodies on the last day when Christ raises us in power.

And so, when Paul says that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God he is speaking of a natural man outside of Christ who does not have this light and glory, which is the direct result of coming into a personal relationship through faith with the One who called for light to appear out of darkness as He created this universe; the same One who has given us the light of His life.

The beauty is that His life is in us today and we have the choice to either live according to the flesh or according to the Spirit. "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord."

But let's move on in our text.

1CO 15:51-53 "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."

Paul speaks of a mystery here in our text. Now, a mystery in biblical terms does not imply that something has been completely hid, only that it's full impact or understanding may have been clouded and is now being brought to light.

For example, when we think of the resurrection of the dead we usually associate this with the New Testament teaching on resurrection. But the fact of the matter is that the Old Testament saints certainly had access to this truth.

The book of Job is considered to be one of the oldest writings in the Old Testament and yet Job seemed to have an understanding of the resurrection of the dead.

JOB 19:25-26 "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. 26 *And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God;...*"

The prophet Isaiah spoke of this as well when addressing the nation of Israel whom he admonished to repent of their sin and live.

ISA 26:19 "But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead."

In the very letter to these Corinthians Paul takes an expression out of the Old Testament which he uses to support the great truth that one day the flesh will no longer be subject to death when he says, "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"

This is taken from the prophet Hosea.

HOS 13:14 "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O grave, is your destruction?"

But the idea that only the redeemed will be raised from the dead was not taught in the Old Testament Scriptures. For the Scriptures teach that both the saved and unsaved would be raised bodily from the grave.

DAN 12:2 "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt."

And of course Jesus would confirm this in the gospel of John.

JOH 5:28-29 "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice 29 and come out - those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned."

This may be mysterious in the sense that we don't fully understand all of the IN'S and OUT'S of how and when it will happen but the fact of the matter is that it will. This is the mystery Paul speaks of in verse 51 when he says, "We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed ..."

Sleep is a metaphor for death and the grave. The change he addresses is the resurrection. Now in verses 52 through 54 he gives us a glimpse of this resurrection as the Lord changes us.

1CO 15:52 "... 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."

Here Paul addresses only one particular group; believers who have trusted Christ.

In a flash. In some of your translations it reads in a moment. In other words, you won't even realize what has happened to you until you've actually been gloriously changed. And then as if to help his readers consider something they can measure, and yet which is so fast you don't even recognize its speed, he uses the phrase, "in the twinkling of an eye."

By the way this might give us an indication of how fast the creation of God came together. God said, let there be light and in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye there was light. We usually associate an entire day, ("there was evening and there was morning, the first day"), with the creation process.

There certainly may have been a process which took place in the creation where an entire day was used by God, but it's clear when you read the creation account that the first or second day was merely a separation of time before the next creative event, not necessarily the amount of time in which a particular thing was created.

The animals for example weren't necessarily created in the span of 24 hours. God spoke them into existence in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, on a particular day, be it day four or five depending on which animal was created as He formed them, like man, from the earth.

And so, on that fourth or fifth day when certain animals were created it is the day that is important in the process, not the actual amount of time that it took God to create, which again, may have been as quick as in the twinkling of an eye. And in the same way we will be recreated in a sense with new bodies in Christ, in the twinkling of an eye.

By the way, when Paul wrote to the Thessalonians he mentions this event of resurrection that happens in the twinkling of an eye, but he also mentions how it will take place in time as one group follows another in the resurrection process.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 ¹³ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will

not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. ¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that *we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.* ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and *the dead in Christ will rise first.* ¹⁷ Then *we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air,* and so we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Verse 17 of 1Thessalonians 4 has come to be known as the rapture. And yet, it is clear that both the rapture, (those who are alive at His coming to be caught up), and the resurrection of all saints in the grave, happens simultaneously.

Now when will this happen according to our text in Corinthians? Paul says, "at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed." (1CO 15:52)

This is precisely what he also told the Thessalonians in the passage we just saw.

1 Thessalonians 4:16 ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and *with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.*

In describing His second coming, our Lord Jesus Christ makes this comment in Matthew.

Matthew 24:29-31 ²⁹ "But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. ³¹ "And *He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.*

This great trumpet is God's way of demonstrating how His appearance is one of holiness which must also include judgment as we stand before Him. It is the trumpet sound that God has utilized

from the beginning to show His people how approaching Him must be done with reverence and holy fear.

^{NAU} **Exodus 19:16** So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that *there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.*

But the trumpet was also used by God to signal His coming to redeem His people as He gathers them to Himself.

^{NAU} **Isaiah 27:13** It will come about also *in that day that a great trumpet will be blown*, and those who were perishing in the land of Assyria and who were scattered in the land of Egypt will come and worship the LORD in the holy mountain at Jerusalem.

Here Isaiah addresses a second exodus from bondage for God's Israel that is associated with the great and last trumpet. But the Israel that Isaiah addresses is the Israel in the last days that is made up of both Jew and Gentile who are scattered over the whole earth as God gathers His elect from the four winds as Jesus made clear in Matthew 24:31.

Our Lord makes it clear that the great trumpet of Matthew 24 is the last trumpet on the last day as Jesus comes back for His people as is pointed out in the gospel of John.

John 6:39-40 ³⁹ "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me *I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.* ⁴⁰ "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, *and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.*"

John 6:44 ⁴⁴ "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and *I will raise him up on the last day.*

John 6:54 ⁵⁴ "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and *I will raise him up on the last day.*

There is no question when the dead will be raised imperishable. It is the last day at the last trumpet; that great day when the Son of Man comes on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.

But on this last day at the last trumpet there will also be a great judgment of those who have rejected Christ.

John 12:48 ⁴⁸ "He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; *the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.*

By the way, the apostle John also speaks of this time when Christ comes back for His own as he also identifies it with the seventh and final trumpet when the Kingdom of God is ushered in for eternity.

^{NAU} **Revelation 11:15** Then *the seventh angel sounded*; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "*The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.*"

And so, when Paul in our text speaks of the last trumpet he is identifying this last day when Christ's kingdom finds its final expression as we are raised in glory to inhabit this eternal kingdom.

1 Corinthians 15:52-53 ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

This is the point at which all things become new in their final form as Paul says that the dead, (and here he only addresses the dead in Christ), are raised imperishable which is to say that in our final resurrection state our bodies are not capable of experiencing death of any type.

And this is why he adds the phrase, "and we will be changed."

Changed from what? Changed from death to life in its final expression found in the resurrection of our bodies. Not changed from body to spirit as if the change were from one form to an entirely different form, but rather from one state of being to another; that is from being identified with the first Adam whose penalty was death, to the last Adam who is a life-giving spirit.

And the last Adam is the first-fruits of what we long for as He was bodily raised from the dead.

And this is where Paul is going in our text. He is going to show that there is a day, a final day of reckoning, when all that was

promised in the beginning to Adam and Eve after their fall was going to be reversed forever.

The death sentence administered to them by God was finally going to be lifted in the power of the resurrection as we are changed, not in nature, (that is flesh and bone), but in position, that of righteous as opposed to sinful flesh.

1 Corinthians 15:53 ⁵³ For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

The perishable is the equivalent of the mortal that Paul has already identified as dishonored, weak and natural which is a picture of the sinful nature we have in the first Adam which must die.

But for us to live in the presence of our God and Savior in His eternal Kingdom **we must** put on the imperishable, **we must** put on immortality.

But it is not we who have the power and authority in ourselves to accomplish this. Remember, it is Christ Himself who raises us on the last day.

It is this last day when we are raised to life when we are changed in the twinkling of an eye from the perishable to the imperishable, from the mortal to immortality as we continue on in our existence in flesh and bone and blood as we are raised to spend eternity with our flesh and bone and blood risen Savior on the new earth, which by the way also is changed on the last day, also known as the day of the Lord.

2 Peter 3:10 ¹⁰ But *the day of the Lord will come like a thief*, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

2 Peter 3:13 ¹³ But according to His promise *we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.*

This is the day we long for, this is the day of our hope and it is the day when death will no longer be a part of our lives.

1 Corinthians 15:54-55 ⁵⁴ But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS

SWALLOWED UP in victory. ⁵⁵ "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?"

These words are the ultimate expression of what it means to finally exhale as we breathe in the breath of life as God intended for His people.

By the way, this expression, "Death is swallowed up," are the words written by Isaiah as he addressed Israel's hope.

^{NAU} **Isaiah 25:8** He will swallow up death for all time, And the Lord GOD will wipe tears away from all faces, And He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; For the LORD has spoken.

When Isaiah addressed Israel with these words it was a hope for the future as they would finally be delivered from all their enemies. But in case it has escaped our notice it is important to understand what Israel Isaiah has in mind for this future eschatological promise.

It is the same Israel to which these same words now apply to the Corinthians, to the Thessalonians, to the Ephesians, the Galatians and to every believer, both Jew and Gentile who make up the new Israel, the Israel of God.

Galatians 6:15-16 ¹⁵ For *neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.* ¹⁶ And those who will walk by this rule, *peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.*

We who are in Christ are the Israel of God with our father Abraham whose faith we share.

Romans 4:16 ¹⁶ For this reason *it is* by faith, in order that *it may be* in accordance with grace, so that *the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,*

Isaiah, of course, was not the only OT saint who longed for the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel to restore her to the bride she was meant to be. Hosea also speaks to the time in which death will be lifted from this bride as the words of Paul in our text bear witness.

1 Corinthians 15:55 ⁵⁵ "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?"

This is a quote from Hosea 13 and it is lifted from a portion of Hosea that is addressing Israel's rebellion and subsequent judgment.

Hosea 13:14 ¹⁴ Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from death? O Death, where are your thorns? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion will be hidden from My sight.

What Hosea does in raising this question of whether or not God will ransom Israel from the power of Sheol, or death, is to magnify God's righteous judgment on Israel and it is implied in the context of Hosea that God will hide His compassion from them.

What Paul does in quoting Hosea is to reverse the attitude from God wherein He does show compassion as He demonstrates how God can and will take the victory from death as He makes us more than conquerors through Christ.

And in fact, this is where Hosea is going with this entire thought of compassion as he makes clear that Israel deserves God's wrath, but then shows how God will extend mercy and compassion on the remnant of Israel.

Hosea 14:1 ^{NAU} Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God, For you have stumbled because of your iniquity.

Hosea 14:4-7 ⁴ I will heal their apostasy, I will love them freely, For My anger has turned away from them. ⁵ I will be like the dew to Israel; He will blossom like the lily, And he will take root like *the cedars of Lebanon*. ⁶ His shoots will sprout, And his beauty will be like the olive tree And his fragrance like *the cedars of Lebanon*. ⁷ Those who live in his shadow Will again raise grain, And they will blossom like the vine. His renown *will be* like the wine of Lebanon.

This is a picture of the Paradise of God as He turns away His anger from Israel and creates an environment of peace among His people where there was only wrath awaiting Israel.

But what is important to note here in Hosea is that the Israel that is being addressed in verses 5-7 is identified with a first person pronoun; "**He** will blossom like the lily", "**he** will take root like *the cedars of Lebanon*.", "**His** shoots will sprout", "Those who live in

his shadow Will again raise grain”, “**His** renown *will be* like the wine of Lebanon.”

When we think of Israel we usually only associate it with the nation of Israel. But the true Israel has always been those who are identified with two individuals, Jacob and Jesus. The nation of Israel got its name from an individual called Jacob whose name was changed by God to Israel.

Only as that family, whose identity was in Jacob or Israel, remained faithful to the covenant promises of God would they be blessed with those promises originally given to Abraham who was not a Jew.

But Jacob, or Israel, was always meant to identify with that called out people upon whom God would shower with blessings of life and peace and fellowship with Himself as this promise went back to the one given to Adam and Eve to reverse the curse and bring paradise back to God’s people.

Like Adam, Israel failed to represent God in this world as the light that they were meant to be. It would be the last Adam, the true Israel, who would fulfill God’s promises to redeem a people for Himself where God would declare to them that He would be their God and they would be His people.

The last Adam, the last Israel, if you will, accomplished that task to faithfully honor God with His entire life and step into the place of judgment for His people which is what Hosea is demonstrating.

Jesus is the latter-day Israel. Quoting G.K. Beale from his book “A New Testament Biblical Theology.”

“Matthew portrays Jesus to be recapitulating the history of Israel because he sums up Israel in himself. Since Israel disobeyed, Jesus comes to do what it should have, so he must retrace Israel’s steps up to the point where it failed and then continue to obey and succeed in the mission that Israel should have carried out....

.... Matthew says that the trip to Egypt and back is the fulfillment of Hosea’s prophecy, “out of Egypt have I called my son (Matt.2:15). Jesus’s journey out of Egypt is identified with Israel’s journey from out of Egypt.”

Those who are in Christ, who is the ultimate Israel, the Son of God, are those who enjoy the healing of their apostasy and

subsequent love from God as Christ our Israel is the dew that enables us to blossom like the lily.

This is the picture of what Paul portrays as death being swallowed up in the victory of Israel, both the individual, Jesus, and the group identified with Him, the Israel of God.

But if there is any doubt as to what death is associated with, Paul makes it clear that our present experience is still in a world that is trapped in the present as we await that hope to come.

1 Corinthians 15:56 ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law;

Presently, we as believers, live in two worlds. This world or age that still experiences the effects of Adam's sin, and the world or age to come to which we belong by faith. This is what Paul points out to the Philippians.

Philippians 3:20-21 ²⁰ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹ 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.

And so, on the one hand, our present citizenship is in heaven today, and yet in the future that citizenship will move from one experienced by faith, to a citizenship of permanent actual residence as our humble state, what Paul has called the natural body in Corinthians, comes into conformity with the body of Christ's glorious resurrection, what Paul calls immortality and imperishable bodies in our text.

And so, as we have said before, we as believers live in the eschatological "already/not yet" experience of our salvation.

But there is no denying that we will possess it as we are sealed by the Holy Spirit for that day of redemption.

It's true that we don't yet possess such victory in total, but it is something we long for. In fact, this is exactly what Paul said to the church in Rome to encourage them in the meantime.

ROM 8:23-25 "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. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes

for what he already has? 25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently."

Paul is saying that our hope will give way to reality.

1CO 15:57-58 "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."

There is always the temptation to wait impatiently. There is always the temptation to kick at the goads until we get what we want.

The Lord is saying that there is a certain attitude we must have toward Him and His church and this world until we've received the prize. Patience seeks the Lord with the express purpose of hearing from Him and then obeying Him so that we might be better servants for His people and the world.

And the reason we can be patient in seeking and obeying the Lord is because we know we have the victory. Why spoil it in the meantime by living in a defeated way? May our promise of victory in the future be worked out in our lives today in the power of the Spirit.

1CO 15:58 "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."

If this is not our attitude; if this is not our goal in this life, then the Lord is saying to us, as He said to these Corinthians, your attitudes need to change. You need to stand firm in the truth of the word of God. You need to be immovable in My power and in My love and in My commission to you.

Nothing less of giving yourself fully to the work of the Lord will do. Again, these aren't my words, they are the words of God. This is His heart being poured out to us regarding what He wants us to do with the victorious life He's given us in Christ.

And finally, He says, that if we will be about doing His work it will have eternal rewards. That's what Paul means when he says, "your labor in the Lord is not in vain." This is what keeps me going. No matter what the world thinks about what you do, if you will do it as unto the Lord as you love Him then it is a work you can be proud of and a work which bring glory to God.

Whether it's sharing your faith with someone, whether it's forgiving a brother or sister in Christ for something they may have said to you that offended you, or whether it's traveling the world as a missionary, these are the types of works for the Lord which are a labor of love that will not go unnoticed by our Lord and will not be in vain.

It's when we think our work is in vain that we quit. It's when we think our work for the Lord is in vain that we serve Him half-heartedly. It's when we think that our work for the Lord is in vain that we don't even get off square one. Let me assure you that your work for the Lord is not in vain.

ISA 3:10 "Tell the righteous it will be well with them, for they will enjoy the fruit of their deeds."

GAL 6:9-10 "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."