

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
**I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
IN CHRIST JESUS.***

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

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Flesh and Blood Shall Not Inherit the Kingdom #2

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As presented in the previous issue, the soul is connected to the body so that when the body dies, so does the soul. Contrary to some teaching, the soul is not immortal any more than the body of death is immortal. For the soul to be immortal, it would have to be joined with the spirit, for the spirit that was given by God returns to God upon death (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Since it is joined with the body, the soul dies when the body dies. Pour out the blood, and the soul is poured out.

For the soul [nephesh] of the flesh is in the blood... (Leviticus 17:11 DNT)

Now, moving on; we have further confirmation that flesh and blood will not inherit the kingdom in Jesus' own words spoken to His disciples after His resurrection but before His final ascension.

Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. (Luke 24:39 KJV)

Jesus knew that His disciples thought he might have been a ghost or apparition with no substance, and He wanted to reassure them that He had substance and prove that He indeed was alive. As proof, they could touch His wounds (John 20:27) and even observe Him eat some food (Luke 24:43; John 21:13). In other words, He was resurrected with a physical body.

However, there was a two-fold meaning in Jesus appearing in a body of flesh and bones; He also had no blood, which was later confirmed by Paul that flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom (1 Corinthians 15:50). According to Paul, if Jesus had had blood running through His body after His resurrection, He would not have been immortal. So, we can conclude from Jesus and Paul that flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom, but flesh and bones shall.

Please keep in mind that the flesh Jesus spoke of is not sinful flesh. In the Greek, the word for *flesh* is *sarx*, which refers "to the meat of an animal and by extension the body." Oftentimes, when Christians refer to the *flesh*, they use it in a negative way as referring to the sinful nature in fallen man. John referred to it as **the lust of the flesh** (1 John 2:16). Paul also said that **nothing good dwelled in his flesh** (Romans 7:18). Peter wrote of **fleshly lusts** (1 Peter 2:11).

However, the word *flesh* also is used in the neutral sense as simply referring to the physical body. After all, **Jesus Christ came in the flesh** (1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 5:7; 1 John 4:2, 3; 2 John 1:7), and there was no sin in Him nor lusting of the flesh (Hebrews 4:15). So, when Jesus spoke of His resurrected body as flesh and bones but without blood, He was referring to His resurrected, physical body.

Putting the words of Jesus and Paul together, we can conclude that the immortal body is a physical body (flesh and bones) without blood flowing through it. It is energized by the spirit, which is confirmed by the fact that the last Adam is a life-giving Spirit. He gives a spiritual-physical body. This is the body that shall inherit the kingdom of God, for it is the body in the likeness of the Son of God.

Why no blood? First, Jesus' blood was poured out on Calvary and presented in the heavenly sanctuary. **Without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness** (Hebrews 9:22). The blood of the Son of God was fully shed for the sin of the world, and there is no longer a need for the blood to be shed, for it has been done once, never to be repeated. He has no more blood to shed. It is finished. Second, from a physical standpoint, the immortal body does not need blood to sustain itself. Again, it needs spirit.

The human body born of Adam's race is dependent on the atmosphere of the earth that contains the right amount of oxygen to sustain life. Oxygen (air) is breathed into the lungs and the blood is oxygenated in order to sustain the cellular life of the body. We could say that the blood transports the breath of life throughout the body. Of course, the blood does much more than this, but the point is that the blood cannot do its job without breath (air), and this makes the human body totally dependent on the earth's atmosphere. Remove air, and man dies. Remove man from the earth without an artificial atmosphere, and he dies.

After His resurrection, Jesus declared: **"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth"** (Matthew 28:18), which means that He commands authority in both realms, and as such, He is not restricted to one or the other, which, in turn, means that He can and does traverse heaven and earth. This is such an obvious point that it is hardly necessary to even state it; however, I state it to make the point that His resurrected body or His spiritual body of flesh and bones cannot be restricted to one realm any more than He can be restricted.

If His body had blood, it would require oxygen, and most likely, He would be limited to earth. Of course, the spirit realm (heaven) could have an atmosphere that sustains a human body, but it is not necessary. Remember when Jesus asked His disciples **"But who do you say that I am,"** and Peter gave the correct answer. **And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven"** (Matthew 16:17 NASB). Here is a clear contrast of the physical realm of man (flesh and blood) and the spirit realm of God the Father who is spirit (John 4:24). Man has been restricted to the physical realm, and the Father has restricted Himself to the spirit realm. He has given the physical realm to His Son, the visible image of the invisible God and the Creator of all things, in the heavens and on the earth, visible and invisible (Colossians 1:15-16; also Psalm 2:8).

However, Jesus is the Mediator between God and men (1 Timothy 2:5), and as such, also the Mediator between heaven (spirit realm) and earth (physical realm). We could say that both realms come together in the Son of God. The good news is that, in Christ, all who inherit the kingdom through immortality will dwell in both realms as well.

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. (1 John 3:2 NASB)

According to John, we do not know exactly what immortality will be like, but we can be assured that we will be like our Lord Jesus in His spiritual body of flesh and bones. Consequently, there is still some mystery as to the exact nature of the immortal body. But we are given some glimpses of its nature. We will look at one of them in the next issue in relation to the sons of Zadok.

Now, many teach that, in immortality, we will be like Adam before his fall, but I believe this is incorrect, for he was restricted to the earth. I believe that **the new creation in Christ** (Galatians 6:15) is much greater. It truly is new in every sense, for it will have no restrictions or limitations.

Adam was a type of Christ (Romans 5:14), and we know that Christ shared in flesh and blood, but without sin (Hebrews 2:14). Adam was a living soul, and as such, I believe that we must assume he had flesh and blood, even before his fall. The soul of his flesh was in the blood, and he was restricted to earth with its atmosphere of air. The proof is in the fact that the Lord came to visit Adam in the cool of the day (Genesis 3:8). We have no indication that Adam entered the spirit realm to meet with the Lord.

Prior to his fall, Adam was clothed in the glory of God, and his soul was not infected with sin, and thus, the dying process had not entered his body. However, when he transgressed God's one command, sin and death entered into his being, presumably into his blood, and the way was barred to the spirit realm.

I believe that this is the reason why blood had to be shed for the forgiveness of sin, and why flesh energized by blood will not inherit the kingdom of God but flesh energized by the spirit will.