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THE BODY OF HIS GLORY

The burden of our meditation has been "our Blessed Hope". The last six editions have been an introductory consideration of this great subject, and we are still on the matter of introducing the subject. In this edition, we will be examining the topic "The Body of His Glory"

There is a verse of scripture that set forth one of the three most important events in human history seen from the divine standpoint and from that of the Lord's people. The three events are the Word taking on humanity, Jesus' death on the Cross of Calvary and Jesus' resurrection. The verse of scripture that tells us of the first is John 1:14. It reads this way;

¹⁴And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth).

We may ask, "Who in the scriptures is referred to as "the Word"? The first three verses of John 1:1-2 introduces this personage to us. We are told

¹In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²The it was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, without him was not anything made that was made.

So then, the Logos, the Word that became flesh, is the instrumental agency in all of creation. The beginning referred to in John 1:1 predates the beginning we find in Genesis 1:1, because all of the animate and inanimate creation (the vast universe) came through the Logos. Straightaway, we may say therefore that the Logos is the very God. He is the visible expression of the invisible God. God dwelling in all of His glory cannot be seen except when He veils His glory. His creatures, both Spirit angels and humans can only see him, even as they know him in the personage of the Word, the Logos. The Logos is God revealed to creation.

But, why did such a great One, the divine, the Most High God, become flesh? Before answering the question, probably we should take another scripture that assist the mind to relate the divine nature to the human nature and to see what a vast world of difference exist between these two natures. For God to take on human flesh there must be something of a very great purpose in it. And to contemplate that, that complete change of nature is beyond man. Man should stand in wonder and in awe of Him. All who are seriously minded should stop in their track to ask this great question: why did the Word become flesh?

In 2Corinthians 8:9, Paul used a figure of speech to describe the glory of the divine nature set in contrast to the frailty of the human nature. We read

⁹For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

It is clear to the discerning that Paul was not here referring to Jesus being wealthy with this world's riches. The reference is not to dollars, pounds sterling, naira and kobo. Of course as the Logos, the Almighty God, he does not stand in need of any such thing. So the riches here are used to typify the attributes, glory and excellence of the divine nature. Though He was rich in the divine nature, for our sakes he became poor. Just as the riches do not refer to physical wealth, the poverty mentioned here does not refer to lack, as man would count it. It is used in a contrast to the divine nature. The human nature is poor compared to the divine nature. But Christ gave up the riches of the divine nature to take on the human nature.

Now, why did the Lord Jesus Christ take on this poverty? Before we answer that let us observe that this Word that became flesh had been involved in human affairs right from the time of creation. In the first four thousand years of human recorded history, we see the Logos in thousands of appearances to His creation, making Himself known to His choice vessels, His servants, telling of things that pertain to the invisible God, His kingdom and man's redemption.

The first set of appearances was to the man Adam. It is all recorded in the first three chapters of Genesis. When He first appeared to Adam, He said, "Be fruitful and multiply and have dominion over all of the visible creation, over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, over all cattle and over all things that creep upon the face of the earth". Again, we find in another appearance the Lord walking in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the day. And Adam said, "I heard thy voice walking in the garden".

So, the Logos, the divine one had always communicated with man, whether to Abraham, to Moses, to Joshua, to Isaiah, to Jeremiah, to Malachi, name any one of His choice instruments. And in all of these divine appearances, it was the Logos carrying out his redemptive activities among men. It was Christ veiled in these appearances ministering to His own.

The great riches of the Old Testament scriptures with the included themes of redemption were made possible by the activities of the Logos. No wonder we find Jesus saying to the Jews in the days of his flesh "Abraham longed to see my day. He saw it and was glad". And the people said, "Ah, ah, you are not yet fifty years old, and you talk of Abraham seeing you". And he answered them, "before Abraham was, I am' (John 8:56-58). He did not say "before Abraham I was" but "before Abraham I am", thus revealing himself as the One that made His Presence known to Moses in the burning bush as the I am.

Jehovah Adona, Jehovah Jeoshua Messiah, is the divine agency in all of God's dealings with man all through the Old Testament age.

Why then did He become flesh? Now, first of all, let it be known that it is evident that he could not have taken on flesh in order to give us the New Testament scriptures as some think. In any case, all of the

twenty-seven books of the New Testament were given after his resurrection. Were it merely to make the word of God known, to make the mind of God known, He would have done this as He had previously done in the Old Testament era. But we are shown by God's word that He became man that he might lay down his life a ransom for all. He came to die.

In Hebrews 9:24-26, on the Lord taking up human nature, we read the following,

²⁴For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us ²⁵Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; ²⁶For then must he often have suffered since the foundations of the world: but now once (that is once for all time, never again so to do) in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

We rejoice greatly that the sound of the preaching of Christ is going to all humanity. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved". If He took on humanity in order to sacrifice Himself for the deliverance of man who fell in the Garden of Eden, then it is important for all to hear him, believe him and receive him into their hearts.

It is evident that if the Word did not become flesh, he would not have died on the cross of Calvary. And if he did not die, there would have been no resurrection. So, of the three most important events of all times, the taking up of humanity by the Lord Jesus Christ, is the greatest of all wonder.

Now, come with me to Philippians 2:5-11. We will be reading yet another scripture to further strengthen what has been said, of this great and complete change of nature. Jesus did not become half man and half God. That is not the force of John 1:14 "And the word became flesh". When he took on humanity, he was completely human, except that, unlike others of the human race, he had no sin. This is something of a great wonder.

Philippians 2:5-11 says

⁵Let this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: ⁶who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: ⁷But made himself of no reputation... (That is what taking on humanity means. He made himself of no reputation), and took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men: ⁸And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. ⁹Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given a name which is above every name: ¹⁰That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; ¹¹And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

He took upon him the form of a servant, he was made in the likeness of men and that for the purpose of death. Having fulfilled this mission we are told that God also hath highly exalted him. The resurrection took him back to the glory of the divine. Since this is so, we may rightly suppose that His resurrection did not clothe him with a human body. In contrast to the body of His humiliation, we may speak of the body taken up by Him in resurrection as glorious. There must be a telling difference between the two.

Let us look at Him again, if He became man to die, what did He become in resurrection? For it is only in understanding the nature of His present estate of being that we may better appreciate the hope set forth in all scripture, concerning the perfection and glorification of the church.

Let us turn to Mark 16. We will be looking at the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ to the disciples after his resurrection. And we are going to learn a few things that would be of help. In Mark 16:9-12, we read

⁹Now when Jesus was risen early in the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. ¹⁰And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. ¹¹And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believe not. ¹²After that he appeared in another form unto two of them as they walked, and went into the country ...

That is recorded also in Luke 23 and concerns the two disciples on their way to Emmaus. Here it says he appeared in another form (Now, when he appeared to Mary Magdalene, someone who had seen Him just some few days back, He was not recognised. (John 20:14-16) This indicates that the bodily form Jesus was seen in, differed from what He was known to possess before His death. Magdalene saw him but it was when He spoke that she recognised him. This is something associated with the nature of the resurrection).

He walked with the two disciples and suddenly appeared beside them as one who was coming from behind them, and talked with them. Notice the two disciples who had been with him few days earlier could not recognise him. This is because Jesus must have appeared in a body different from the one he had before. In other instances, he appeared in yet other forms, thus providing an interesting insight into our subject.

Let us go to Luke 24. We are discussing the post-resurrection nature of the Lord Jesus Christ. With what body did he come? Luke 24. We read from 33-36. This was after the Lord had appeared to the two disciples on he way to Emmaus

³³And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, ³⁴saying, the Lord is risen Indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. ³⁵And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was made known by them in breaking of bread. ³⁶And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, peace be unto you.

From the reading, it is clear that the disciples were together in a room with the doors locked when the Lord suddenly appeared in their midst. And they could not recognise him because he was appearing in a form different from what they knew before. But from his words, they were able to know it was Jesus. You may want to probe further in John 20:24-29; John 21:4 and other appearances of Jesus.

We go straight now to Acts 1 to see the final account just before he returned to heaven. Acts 1:1-3

¹The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

²Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Spirit had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: ³To whom also he shewed himself alive

after his passion (suffering) by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God

Paul listed these appearances of the Lord to his disciples as been in eight distinct occasions. Now, we know that he did not remain visibly with the disciples in all of those forty days. There is a sense in which we understand that Christ was always present with them throughout the forty days, but they were only able to see Him physically and be conscious of his presence when He appeared in visible human bodies to speak to them. Whenever he had something to communicate with them, he would appear in a human form, best suited for that particular occasion. This is important.

Throughout the three and a half years of his ministry upon the earth, the twelve disciples were always with him and when he stepped out, the other disciples came from their various homes to accompany him in his preaching mission. But in those forty days, knowing that there were so many things to teach the disciples, he did not live with them in a physical way. He did not, as he did before, go to the house of Mary, the house of Lazarus, of Mary and Martha, spending he night there. No, when he has something to say to them, he appears in human form, communicates to them and returns back into his spirit nature and glory. This same Jesus the one that was taken to glory is the one the angel said would come in like manner.

It is important for us to know that Jesus in the glory of the divine can be everywhere present at the same time. This is the distinctive character of immortality. Paul in 1Cor. 15 teaches on five aspects of the resurrection glory. In talking about the resurrection body of the Lord Jesus Christ which is the same type of body the overcoming church will put on in full resurrection, he says (1Cor. 15:35-41)

³⁵But some man will say, how are the dead raise up? And with what body do they come? ³⁶Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: ³⁷And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: ³⁸But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. ³⁹All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. ⁴⁰There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another, ⁴¹There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.

Now follow verse 42 carefully. The emphasis here is on the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and of those believers who partake of the first resurrection to share with the Lord the glory of immortality.

⁴²So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption (so, the body of the resurrection is incorruptible). ⁴³It is sown in dishonour: it is raised in glory (the body of the resurrection is a glorious one): it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: ⁴⁴It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body....

So the body with which the Lord Jesus Christ was raised up is a spiritual one. It is divine and all glorious. Although he veiled that glory in those forty days in which he appeared to his disciples, the Lord is clothed

with the divine body in all of its majesty. There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body, Paul says. The natural body is made of flesh and blood. The spiritual body is not made of any such material, even though the divine can appear in a visible human body of flesh and bone. Such appearing is usually for a specific purpose and is often for a very short period, after which he returns back into His spirit estate.

So, Christ resurrected in a spiritual body: a divine body, a glorious body. Psalm 104: 2 says it is a body of intense light. Psalm 104:1,2 reads

¹BLESS the LORD, O my soul, O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty. ²Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment.

In visions communicating to us the glory of His being. He is described as the one *who maketh the cloud his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of he wind.*

Yes, the Lord is clothed with glory, honour, majesty and great excellence. He dwells in unapproachable light. If he is to appear to us now, it must be that we shall see him in a vision for if He appears as he is, the glory will be very blinding. Recall the experience of Paul on the way to Damascus. The Lord Jesus Christ just made a flash of Light to go forth from His body, and that was what cast him down and blinded him. Recounting that experience in Acts 26: 13, Paul said the Light, which appeared to him, was above the brightness of the sun yet it was not the full and naked expression of the Lords appearing. We know that this same Jesus, the glorified Son of God, will come again in His exalted estate for we shall see Him as He is (Acts 1:9-11, I John 3:1-2).

In summing up, lets observe again: the resurrection body of the Lord Jesus Christ is incorruptible, it is glorious, it is full of power, not a natural but a spiritual body. And verse 45 of 1 Corinthian 15, caps it in the following words

⁴⁵And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening Spirit (that is a life giving Spirit).

Springing from His resurrection Jesus Christ is made a life giving spirit. This glory is also in view for the church. We will read Philippians 3:20-21 to underscore this point.

²⁰For our conversation (our citizenship, our commonwealth) is in heaven from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. ²¹Who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned Like unto his glorious body, according to the working Whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

When He comes, we are told He will change our vile bodies to be conformed like unto his glorious body. This is exciting. He comes in the glory of His excellency to lift up the overcoming church so that she will evermore associate with him in that estate of glory. This is what we read in 1 John 3;1-2

¹BEHOLD, what manner of Love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Son of God: therefore the world knowth us not, because it knew him not. ²Beloved, now are we

the Sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is...

There is an erroneous view of immortality as being a quality of life shared by human souls and angelic spirits. Rightly seen, immortality is the exclusive preserve of God. Not even the angels are immortal, for they have dependent lives. This is clear. If they were not to have dependent lives, it would not be possible for Satan and his angels to be destroyed in the lake of fire. But immortality is a promise held out for the church.

We believe that these scriptures are factual and must be taken the way they are. We shall be like him. We shall see him as He is. He shall change our vile bodies. We shall come to the full glory of the spirit nature. We shall share in his incorruptibility and shall be brought into immortality.

The emphasis in this meditation is for us to appreciate that Christ Jesus the Lord is no more flesh and blood and will not take up the human nature. When he comes, he shall come in His majesty; with the power and glory that befits His divine nature. We will close this meditation by reading Acts 1:9-11. Whatever the Lord does by words and by deeds are instructions to us. And, it is quite instructive for us to see that this same Jesus that was taken up to glory in the beauty of the divine nature shall come in the same manner.

The meaning and purpose of all of these we shall see clearly as we continue in this series of teachings. When we see the glory very clearly, it will have a humbling effect upon us. We would with cleave to the Son of God who qualifies us to have a share in the glorious inheritance that he has set before us. Act 1:9
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⁹And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. ¹⁰And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? ¹¹This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

May the Lord grant us the joy of seeing him and associating with him and being ever with him in his eternal glory, In Jesus name. Amen