

GOD'S CALL

Major themes in the Scriptures

The wisdom of God (9)

Wisdom in creation of spiritual body

Reference: GDC-S19-009-Mw-R00-P2

(Originally spoken on 28 June 2015, edited on 6 July 2015)

Web site: <http://www.ajourneyinlife.org> and <http://www.ajourneyinlife.com>

This message is protected by copyright © 2015 Lim Liong. Permission is given to reproduce part (where the meaning is retained and the part is not quoted out of context) or all, of it, for personal use or for distribution, on condition that **no changes are made** and the message is **distributed free** of charge. Please do so prayerfully and discreetly.

Unless otherwise stated, Scripture quotations are taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

The paragraphs above as well as this paragraph must be included when the message is reproduced so that others who reproduce it will be conscious of the conditions stated above.

The Lord willing, today we will consider the subject, “The wisdom of God” the ninth message, in seeking to appreciate major themes in the Scriptures.

A short summary of today’s message:

God is perfectly good and infinitely wise, but we often do not appreciate His wisdom because we are more concerned and occupied with the immediate and passing issues than by the long-term moral and spiritual meaning that God wants to bring about. This is seen in His wisdom expressed in His creation of the spiritual body for man.

We will seek the Lord to appreciate more of what this means.

As we live in this world, in this body that we have now, we go through many different kinds of experiences.

Some of these experiences may be very pleasant, enjoyable, exciting, and we look forward for more. Some experiences may be very unpleasant and unbearable, and we wish that they could be over.

God in His wisdom has seen it fit for us to go through these kinds of experiences. What is His purpose?

There are many aspects to it and today, I want to consider with you an aspect that God has prepared for us in the future which, if we go through our time well on earth, we will benefit deeply and we will be very, very grateful.

When I was young, I used to read fairy tales, which I am sure most of you would have done so too. One of the things that impressed me deeply in fairy tales was the phrase or the sentence: "And they lived happily ever after". This was such a beautiful statement, something so comforting. You may read of the struggles, the difficulties, the battle against the evil people but at the end of it, good triumphs and the people who pursue what is good, they live happily ever after. I am sure many of us appreciate that.

However, although I liked that very much, I also knew that it was not true; it is just a fairy tale. Some people say, "All good things must come to an end". So whatever good things you may experience on earth, they will come to an end. There may be happy times but they do not last; you cannot carry on living like that. So they "live happily ever after" only for a short period.

But I want to tell you that there is something far better – and it is true: the good things will get better and we can live truly happily ever after forever. That is what God has intended for us, if we are prepared to walk with Him.

God in His wisdom allowed us to go through many of these experiences in this body, which may help us to appreciate the spiritual future body that we will have if we are faithful to Him.

How often, when we go through something meaningful, we wish that we can have more of it... How often there are many things we would like to do that are good, but we have no power to do it... How often we want this to last forever but it will not... And how often when we go through very difficult times, we wish that we have a different body. Well, all this can be true, if we learn to appreciate the spiritual body that God wants to give to us.

So although generally I would not want to concentrate on what is going to happen in heaven but to concentrate on living well on earth (and it is still true), there is a place for us to look forward to what God has in store for us and this can motivate us in how we live today. Many people achieve great things because they have a strong motivation. We are not seeking to achieve great things in the world but we can attain to something very, very meaningful if we are sufficiently motivated, we understand what it means and we want it.

So today I will consider with you some aspects of this wonderful body that God has prepared for us. Let us turn to **1 Corinthians 15: 19-23**.

1 Corinthians 15: 19-23

- 19 If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.
- 20 But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.
- 21 For since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead.
- 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.
- 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming,

The apostle Paul says, "If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied."

If in reality, there is no resurrection and we will all die and perish and our lives will end with physical death, then we are of all men most to be pitied because we are living on false hope. We thought, we think, it will be such a wonderful thing in the future but there is nothing. We suffer, we live, we do, thinking that there will be something meaningful but there is nothing.

But that is not true. Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. Christ has been raised and His resurrection is to help us also to appreciate that we too will be resurrected. Christ is the first fruits of those who are asleep, He leads the way and because of His resurrection, we can participate in that kind of resurrection; "those who are asleep" refers to those who are physically dead. So, we see here the apostle Paul is referring to physical resurrection, the resurrection of the body.

"...since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead" – Adam sinned and his body began to die. And so too all the descendants of Adam live in the process of physical death throughout their lives. You can say the moment you are born in this world, you begin the process of dying; it is a matter of time generally. Yes, you may grow stronger, so-called "wiser", more able, but the process of dying is present and in time to come, this body will not function any more.

But by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead: the Lord Jesus Christ will bring about resurrection of the body.

So it is not that the Lord Jesus Christ will prevent our bodies from dying but He allows us to die because we are descendants of Adam. Yet, He will raise us up from the dead with a new body. "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive."

Then he says, "But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming..."

This tells us that if we want to appreciate what this body is going to be like, it will help us to look at what happened to the Lord Jesus after He rose from the dead. If we look at some of these situations that took place after the Lord Jesus was raised from the dead, it will help us to appreciate what kind of body we are likely to have.

Some aspects we cannot be certain but there are features that are important, that are helpful for us to be aware. He is the first fruits, but we will follow.

What are some of these features? The apostle Paul went on in **1 Corinthians 15: 42-44** to tell us some of these features of the resurrection body:

1 Corinthians 15: 42-44

- 42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable *body*, it is raised an imperishable *body*;
- 43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;
- 44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual *body*.

As we read this passage, we may be attracted to, and impressed by, phrases such as “imperishable body”, “raised in glory”, “raised in power”. These are meaningful, encouraging, attractive aspects that we can look forward to. We want our body to be able to carry on living in a context that is meaningful; we want our body to express glory and power.

All these will be present in our spiritual body, but I want to draw your attention to the last part, which is the primary aspect that qualifies the other aspects: it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. It is the spiritual body that we must pay attention to: not so much that it is imperishable or there is glory, there is power, although these are important. The primary aspect is: it is a spiritual body.

So what does that mean? Why is that so important? Why is that so central in what God wants to do?

Basically, a natural body draws your attention to, and moves you in, the direction of what is natural: things basically in the physical plane, natural physical plane, where there is not the presence of spiritual life.

The spiritual body on the other hand draws us, encourages us, supports us in the direction of the spiritual: where there is spiritual life, fellowship with God, working together with God to fulfil His purposes in the spiritual eternal realm. A spiritual body is meant to help us accomplish spiritual reality of eternal value.

The apostle Paul explains this principle in **1 Corinthians 2: 14-16**.

1 Corinthians 2: 14-16

- 14 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.
15 But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one.
16 For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM?
But we have the mind of Christ.

The contrast between the natural man and the spiritual man is in the direction of his heart, the meaning of his life, the concentration of his energies and the approach that he takes. A natural man looks at life at the natural plane: primarily in the physical, temporal plane and he is basically self-confident; he does not really look to God to learn, to receive. He does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; he regards them as foolish; he cannot understand them.

So, a person who follows the direction of the natural body will become like that: a natural man.

On the other hand, he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one.

He who is spiritual sees the spiritual realm, appreciates what is of importance that God wants to accomplish, he is receptive to the things of the Spirit of God and he can understand what is truly happening.

For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ. So he who is spiritual has developed his understanding and direction of life similar to the whole approach of the Lord Jesus Christ; we have the mind of Christ. The apostle Paul tells us we must renew our minds, and when we renew our minds, the minds become more and more like that of Christ. We will learn to appreciate the ways of God, which are higher than our ways, the thoughts of God, which are higher than our thoughts.

So if we want to have a spiritual body in the future, we must ask ourselves: Why do we want that spiritual body?

Do you want that body so that you can have a lot of power, you can do many things that you want to do; you can be great, you can fulfil all your wishes? Or do you want to have a spiritual body so that you can live a life that is truly meaningful in the eyes of God, you can know Him deeply, you can appreciate what is in His heart, what He wants to accomplish and you can walk with Him, fulfil His will?

Your choice will affect what kind of body you will have. If we bear in mind that the natural body is not fixed, so too the spiritual body is not fixed.

You may enter this world with a certain kind of physical body but how you treat it will affect how it grows. If you do not exercise at all and you keep on doing whatever you feel like then your body will grow weak, but if you learn to do what is helpful then generally, you will become stronger.

Of course, there are other factors that are at work but the principle is: the way we live in this body will affect how the body will function and the more we give in to the things that we should not, the more it will have a grip on our lives.

In the spiritual realm, there is a similar principle. As I understand, in the future when we have a spiritual body, what kind of body we will have is very likely to be related to how we have nurtured our spirit: the more we have nurtured our spirit in fellowship with God, the more meaningful our spiritual body will be.

1 John 3: 2-3

- 2 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.
- 3 And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

Some people interpret this passage to mean that when the Lord Jesus appears, we will be like Him in moral character because we will see Him just as He is.

But if we ponder over the revelation in the Scriptures, we know that that is not possible. It does not mean that when the Lord Jesus appears, all His disciples will be like Him in moral perfection.

Our moral character does not change with circumstances; our moral character changes with moral choice. Whether on earth or in heaven, if there are aspects in our lives that are not properly developed, they will not change just because we go to heaven, but our behaviour may change.

Christians who spend time with fellow Christians who are positive, they tend to be more positive in their behaviour because it is an environment that encourages them to be positive.

When they mix with others who are selfish, calculative and scheming, they may also soon become like that. Bad company corrupts good morals. So, our behaviour can change depending on the company that we have, and in time to come, that will change our character because we have chosen to follow that path.

Circumstances by themselves do not change our character but as we learn to choose in accordance with that direction, then our heart will change.

So what then is the apostle John writing about?

He is talking about the Second Coming; he is talking about what kind of body we will have.

He says, "...now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be". We do not have a spiritual body yet. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him.

So, in the resurrection, when we are resurrected, we will be like Him in the sense of the spiritual body, the resurrection from the dead, because we will see Him just as He is **now**.

The Lord Jesus rose from the dead and His appearance, His state, is now different from before His death on the cross. That is something we can look forward to: we will have a body like His.

Then the final part is very important: And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

If we want to have a body like the Lord Jesus, if we look forward to that, we must understand that the way in which we can properly receive what He wants to give to us is to purify ourselves, just as He is pure.

This is because the spiritual body is meant for the spiritual man, the spiritual woman.

If we are not spiritual then the spiritual body will not have as much meaning for us as when we are more spiritual because it will correspond with the state of our heart.

So then, if we appreciate that, then we will understand that when this body is raised imperishable, it is not just an imperishable body that will last forever; it is imperishable to fulfil the will of God, it is imperishable in a continuous state of doing the things that are really good and meaningful, a spiritual direction.

“...it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory”: What kind of glory?

It is not just glory in terms of being able to do many great things for people to see; it is glory in the moral and spiritual realm, but it will involve the physical realm. It will involve doing many things in the physical realm, but that physical realm will have spiritual life when performed by a spiritual body.

So there will be glory that comes through, of the moral glory of God.

“...it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power”: Again that power is not just physical power to do many things; even Satan has a lot of power to do many things, but this power, while it has a physical aspect to it, is primarily the power to live well, to do the things that will contribute in what God wants to accomplish in His kingdom.

All these will be manifested in the spiritual body.

So in **1 Corinthians 15: 50-57**, the apostle Paul tells us about this aspect of the perishable and the imperishable, and the implications:

1 Corinthians 15: 50-57

- 50 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.
- 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed,
- 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.
- 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?"
- 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law;
- 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

So, notice that the apostle Paul links the imperishable very strongly with the issue of sin having been overcome.

He says, "the perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality". He says, "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable". So if we are to dwell in the kingdom of God forever, we need this spiritual body. Flesh and blood, this body that we have now, cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

This imperishable body that we have, which we will have, will bring about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory" because there will be no more death for this body. "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" That means death would have been conquered.

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. So what brings about death? It is sin. When Adam sinned, death started in the body.

"...and the power of sin is the law": God's law that sin will have to be punished. It does not mean that every physical death is an indication of sin on our part but it is the principle underlying it: that death has come about because of the issue of sin.

But why is it that now we can have an imperishable body? It is because God has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. When the Lord Jesus Christ conquered sin in His life and in His death and His resurrection, that victory can now be ours and when that victory is ours by faith, then we will experience that freedom from death, we will be able to receive this spiritual body.

So the spiritual body, the imperishable body that we will have is meant to help us live a life that is free from sin, live a life that will truly honour God, live a life that is like that of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us then have a look at some of the other aspects that we can see in the Lord Jesus after He rose from the dead.

John 20: 19

So when it was evening on that day, the first *day* of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and *said to them, "**Peace be with you.**"

The disciples were afraid because the Jews were seeking to kill them. So the doors were shut and in such a context where the doors were shut, the Lord Jesus appeared. He came and stood in their midst and *said to them, "**Peace be with you.**"

If the Lord Jesus continued to have a natural body like ours, He would not have been able to enter the house where the doors were shut. But His body was now different; it was a resurrection body, a spiritual body, and this body can pass through closed doors.

Is not that interesting? We know of X-rays that can go through solid material. So the spiritual body that we have can go through solid material. We may wonder: how can it be possible, it is a body? But if we understand in terms of the structure of material, we know that there are different molecular structures in different substances and this can affect how they move, how they function, how they travel.

So, X-rays can pass through solid material but a piece of metal cannot pass through.

We see in the Old Testament when Moses threw down the rod, it became a serpent: the molecules were rearranged; the magicians could also do that.

But these are just manifestations of physical changes.

What is important here is for us to appreciate that God wants to give us a body that would be very adaptable: it can move, it can function in many different ways.

So in that context, the disciples were together and they were fearful but the Lord Jesus just came into their midst and He said, "*Peace be with you.*"

That would have been a very great encouragement to them.

So we will be able to function in a spiritual body in many ways that are appropriate, helpful, in the future. There will be many kinds of situations where the ability of the spiritual body will become important.

Now in this body, we are limited, very much limited.

We are here at this place now; we cannot be somewhere else at the same time and it will take us some time to travel, sometimes one day, sometimes more, even by aeroplane. But we can see that the angels can travel from heaven to earth very fast.

When we have a spiritual body there will also be abilities that have some similarities with that but, from what I can see, better than that because there is an underlying spiritual reality behind the spiritual body that is not just abilities in the physical realm.

John 20: 24-29

- 24 But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.
- 25 So the other disciples were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."
- 26 After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus *came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace *be with you.*"
- 27 Then He *said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing."
- 28 Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"
- 29 Jesus *said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed *are they who did not see, and yet believed.*"

This incident tells us that what the Lord Jesus went through on earth will still be recognizable after the resurrection. It is not that we will have a new body, a completely new body with no relationship to our current state; there will be a relationship. But neither does it mean that our spiritual body will be so very similar to the body that we have now.

Later, we will see the Lord Jesus can appear in many different forms, but the principle here is that His hands, His side, will still reveal what He went through at the cross. He says, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side..." So He was telling Thomas, "You can recognize Me: I was crucified, I was pierced through", and this can be seen in His spiritual body.

That is very helpful because it helps us to appreciate that the life we live on earth will have a significant relationship with our life in heaven. It is not that we start everything fresh and new, but it is also true that many, many things that we do on earth, we accomplish on earth, will all be burnt up. They are of no use because they were not accomplished in fellowship with God, they were not done with a spiritual direction and meaning; so all that will be burnt up.

But whatever we do in true fellowship with the Lord will continue in its meaning and will have its manifestation. So, we need to be very careful how we live our lives each day, each moment, so that when we look back from eternity, we can be so grateful that God has helped us to live well.

Luke 24: 36-43

- 36 While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst and *said to them, "Peace be to you."
 37 But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit.
 38 And He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?
 39 "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."
 40 And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.
 41 While they still could not believe *it* because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?"
 42 They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish;
 43 and He took it and ate *it* before them.

Do you not think it is a very interesting incident? The Lord Jesus appeared to His disciples; they were frightened, they were startled, and He said, "Why are you troubled"? They were troubled because they thought... they were seeing a spirit. The Lord Jesus said, "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."

So while the angels may appear in different forms, it is not a physical structure; it is still spirit in different forms. But here the Lord Jesus has a physical structure: **flesh and bones**. They could touch His hands and His feet; they were crucified. He says: "a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have", and this physical structure is very helpful for us in the future.

While they still could not believe *it* because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; and He took it and ate *it* before them. So, the spiritual body can eat. We may think that it is a spirit, so all these functions we have in the body are no longer applicable. It is not true; the Lord Jesus ate the fish with them.

But does it mean that this spiritual body is dependent on food like the fish?

I do not think so. It is imperishable; it does not need all this, but it can enjoy these things. So, if you like fish, it is still possible in the future; but you must make sure you like fish for the right reasons. If it is for the wrong reason, then you will not have a meaningful spiritual body. But if you appreciate what God gives and you have lived in fellowship with Him, God gives us many good things to enjoy, at the right time, at the right place.

So, we can still eat, and many of the things that we do now may still be quite functional in heaven. So there are many things while we are on earth we may long for, we wish they can continue, yes many of these things may continue: something that we can be very happy about, and it is in a form that is pleasant, meaningful, that can bring happiness of a long duration.

1Thessalonians 4: 16-17

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.

So this tells us of the Lord Jesus coming again. He will come from heaven, He will descend to earth, so the implication will be He will be travelling at great speed.

So too will we when we are caught up together with Him. So too in the future when we are involved in the battle against the evil forces before the Final Judgment; those who have been resurrected and participate in what the Lord wants to do, they will also experience the power to move quickly and the power to do things even in the physical realm.

An interesting aspect of the spiritual body is that it can take different forms. In **Mark 16: 10-14**, we read:

Mark 16: 10-14

- 10 She went and reported to those who had been with Him, while they were mourning and weeping.
- 11 When they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they refused to believe it.
- 12 After that, He appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking along on their way to the country.
- 13 They went away and reported it to the others, but they did not believe them either.
- 14 Afterward He appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining *at the table*; and He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen.

The Lord Jesus appeared in different forms in different circumstances. There is a reason for it; there is a purpose for it, and it is one of the abilities of the spiritual body.

John 20: 14-16

- 14 When she had said this, she turned around and *saw Jesus standing *there*, and did not know that it was Jesus.
- 15 Jesus *said to her, "**Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?**" Supposing Him to be the gardener, she *said to Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away."
- 16 Jesus *said to her, "**Mary!**" She turned and *said to Him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means, Teacher).

Mary knew the Lord Jesus very well and yet when He appeared to her in His resurrection body, she did not recognize Him; she thought that He was a gardener. The Lord Jesus *said to her, "**Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?**" She could not recognize Him but when the Lord Jesus *said to her, "**Mary!**" She turned and *said to Him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!"; she recognized Him. When He called her in a manner that was meaningful to her, she could recognize Him.

So this tells us that the primary issue is the meaning, the moral and spiritual meaning; it is not the physical form.

The physical form was not recognized by Mary, but the relationship was recognized, she appreciated it. When the Lord Jesus *said to her, "Mary!" there was a relationship that was meaningful to her; she immediately recognized it.

In the spiritual realm in eternity, that will be the primary issue: we should not be primarily looking at physical forms, power, abilities, but relationship.

Then we read in **Revelation 1: 12-18**, another appearance of the Lord Jesus that is very different from the others. This is a record of the apostle John's encounter with the risen Lord Jesus. He says,

Revelation 1: 12-18

- 12 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands;
- 13 and in the middle of the lampstands *I saw* one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash.
- 14 His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire.
- 15 His feet *were* like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice *was* like the sound of many waters.
- 16 In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.
- 17 When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last,
- 18 and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.

This appearance of the Lord Jesus is so very different from the other appearances. This is the appearance of glory, of majesty, of power: the Lord Jesus risen from the dead in His authority and glory and power. He was clothed in a robe reaching to the feet... He was girded across His chest with a golden sash: His clothing was impressive. His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow: we do not see this image of the Lord Jesus in other appearances. His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet *were* like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice *was* like the sound of many waters. It is a majestic appearance of the Lord Jesus in His resurrection body, spiritual body.

And finally, I want to draw your attention to something interesting: **Revelation 5: 1-9**. I will not read this whole passage but just to mention that the Lord Jesus appeared in a form that may seem to be very different from the description of Him.

Verse 5 says: ...one of the elders *said to me, "Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals."

...the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah... has overcome...: So you would expect to see a lion but the next verse tells us: And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. So instead of seeing a Lion, we see a Lamb. Is not that very interesting?

That again brings across a very important message for us: the Lord Jesus was a Lamb led to the slaughter; He gave Himself for us. He appeared so very, very weak as a Lamb but in reality, He is also a Lion and He conquers all that is evil, including Satan, the roaring lion. So, the Lord Jesus is more powerful than all evil beings but He comes to us appearing as a Lamb.

Then we are told, "When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints." They fell down before the Lamb to worship the Lamb. So normally, we do not worship a lamb; a lamb is weak and frail. But here, this is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and the **book of Revelation** also tells us the wrath of the Lamb; the people were frightened, terrified of the wrath of the Lamb. So, this is a very different Lamb from what many people may think.

So too it should be true of us: we should live our lives like a lamb, not trying to assert ourselves, to show our power, our ability; that we want people to submit to us.

No, we can be gentle, caring, willing to do whatever is useful and good, but within the lamb, there should be the lion prepared to fight against all evil, prepared to stand with God for all that is good.

There must be that lion within the lamb then our lives will honour God.

But if we are only a lamb, then we will be taken advantage of by others, people can lead us astray, we are afraid to offend people and we will do the things that are demanded of us, and that is not like the Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus is the Lion within the Lamb and we must learn to live like that.

So, the various manifestations, appearances, are very meaningful because they help to communicate spiritual reality.

We know that when people want to tell a story or present a story in an acting form, the same person may disguise himself in many different roles to portray different things because that helps to communicate the meaning.

Well, in our spiritual body, we can do that quite readily: we can appear in different forms according to what is most appropriate and helpful, so that God may have the freedom to work through us and it will be a very interesting experience, context for relationship, for communication, for expression of God's will.

So, we can look forward to eternity with the view of receiving the spiritual body that God wants to give to us, but we need to be very careful that our priorities are right, that we want the spiritual rather than the physical, the natural.

If we concentrate on developing quality in our hearts, if we concentrate on a deep worship of God, appreciation of Him and His ways, if we give our lives to fulfil what God wants to accomplish, then we can meaningfully look forward to a good spiritual body that can help us to express our love for God, communicate what He wants to say and do in eternity.

So, if we want to live our lives well and fulfil God's call in our lives, we must learn to appreciate the wisdom of God in His creation of man as a whole, including the spiritual body He will provide for us in eternity, and work together with Him gladly and in faith while on earth to fulfil His will for eternity.

God has a very meaningful purpose for us. Will we respond well and bring joy to His heart, or will we go our own way, waste away our lives and regret subsequently?

The choice is ours: how we will live our lives, what will happen to us. The Lord is always willing to help us if we are prepared to listen to Him, follow Him and walk with Him.

Let us then as we come before the Lord, ask Him to help us to appreciate His wisdom in the way He created this universe, in the way He created man, in the way He created man with a body and in the way that He will give us a spiritual body. And let us thank Him for His kindness towards us and ask Him to help us to respond well, to be true to Him.

Let us recognize that all this is possible because of the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus, who died for us.