

## THE PERMANENCE OF THE SPIRITUAL

By Bill Irby, July 18, 2007

In last week's article we discussed the duality of human existence from the perspective of 2 Corinthians 5:1. People are not just one thing, body or spirit. While we are here we are both. Our bodies are but tents to be replaced one day by the resurrection body (see 1 Corinthians 15 and 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:8).

As we look further into these verses insights that bolster these ideas emerge. In 2 Corinthians 5:2 Paul says that we groan in this tent, and that we look forward to our habitation which is from Heaven. If it is the case that we groan in our present bodies, of necessity we are not the same thing altogether as our physical bodies. We are in the physical body but not the same thing as the physical body. We look forward to a habitation (which is a place to live) that comes from Heaven. Again, we are in some ways separate entities from the physical bodies we inhabit here because we look forward to inhabiting different bodies (the resurrection body of 1 Corinthians 15) one day.

What's the point? Paul argues for the permanence of the spiritual. Physical bodies are only temporary tents. Indeed the whole of the physical universe will cease to exist down to its very elements at the return of the Lord (2 Peter 3:9ff.). Everything physical is going away.

When we come to understand the permanence of the spiritual, our perspective about life will change. Notice that in verse four Paul says, "For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life" (NKJV). The context here and in other New Testament passages indicates that he is writing about the situation that will exist when Christians get to Heaven. The resurrection bodies there are spiritual. As far as I can see, a further detailed description is unavailable to us, except for Paul's discussion of the matter in 1 Corinthians 15. Whatever the fine points, these habitations will not be tents. They will be permanent because they will be spiritual.

I mentioned a change in perspective that arises out of this information. Notice the words "groan" and "burdened." This life is a wonderful thing, but in comparison with what is to come, it is a burden and something that makes us groan. This is the character of our existence here. This being the case, we ought to think about our lives here as they truly are a prelude to a greater and glorious existence.