

Flesh and Blood

by Woody Oliver

The phrase flesh and blood appears in the Bible five times, only in the New Testament. The words can be used to describe a physical being as well as the inward man. However, most seem to apply them to the physical body. Note the Living Bible: **1 Cor 15:50**: *I tell you this, my brothers: an earthly body made of flesh and blood cannot get into God's Kingdom. These perishable bodies of ours are not the right kind to live forever.* Compare this verse to: **Eph 6:12**: *For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against persons without bodies--the evil rulers of the unseen world, those mighty satanic beings and great evil princes of darkness who rule this world; and against huge numbers of wicked spirits in the spirit world.*

Here are the same verses from the King James Bible: **1 Cor 15:50**: *Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.* **Eph 6:12**: *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high (places).* The King James Version represents, closely, the original language, where the Living Bible is highly interpretative, reflecting the author's beliefs. I do not agree with the Living Bible, that we are fighting bodiless spirits external to us. However, if the struggle is inward, then why would it not be against flesh and blood? First, consider the words separate as symbols:

Blood: In the study, Tabernacle Types, blood was shown to be a symbol for the soul - life is in the blood (Lev 17:11). The blood was given upon the altar of the heart (cf Jer 17:1) to make a covering, or reconciliation for you. By giving us an understanding of the cross, God is reconciling us to Himself, and figuratively, covering us with His knowledge. Christ poured out his soul, or his life, unto death (Isa 53:12), and literally shed his own blood in order that we might be covered with God's righteousness, or, the way He thinks.

Flesh: Paul uses the word flesh to describe the corrupted mind of man: **Rom 8:1, 5-6**: *1. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit... 5. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. 6. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.* The same Greek word is translated flesh and carnally, which could just as easily been translated fleshly minded. Other words Paul uses in parallel with flesh is members and body of death (Romans 7:23, 25), and states that the flesh serves the law of sin.

The physical flesh does nothing on its own, but what the thoughts of the mind tell it to do. As the blood carries the record of the physical body, so the soul carries the record of the flesh, inwardly - *the life of the flesh is in the blood*. Just as what we feed the physical body determines our overall health, so what we feed the spiritual body determines our spiritual health. The term flesh and blood describes the soul of man as being corrupted by his own thoughts - *There is none righteous, not even one; There is none who is understanding, there is none who is seeking after God.* (Rom 3:10-11, Young's Bible).

Mt 16:17: *And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.* Like other Bible concepts, the phrase can be taken to mean 'another person', or the 'mind-set' of man. I am inclined to think Jesus was saying, "Peter, the carnal mind-set did not reveal to you that I am the Son of God, but the influence of my Father's spiritual (heavenly) way of thinking gave you this idea." Considering fleshly thinking, we obtain thoughts from others, as well as our own. So, the application here covers overall the way man thinks.

Here is another application: **Gal 1:15-17:** *15. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, 16. To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: 17. Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.* Paul answered the call of grace (God's divine influence on his heart), and apparently went into Arabia for a time to contemplate all the events and teachings about the Messiah. He did not confer with his peers in Jerusalem or go to the other apostles, or any other man, nor did he depend on his own knowledge & wisdom for understanding. He sought God for the revelation of the mysteries of the kingdom (Eph 3:1-5).

There is one other verse to consider before going back to the original verses with which we began: **Heb 2:14-16:** *14. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might [inactivate the one having the strength] of death, that is, the devil (1228); 15. And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. 16. For verily he took not on (him the nature of) angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. [Greek] To partake of flesh and blood is parallel with the partaking of the seed of Abraham. Christ partook of man's nature via Mary, his human mother, and was raised under the law as a devout Jew - He came in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom 8:3), i.e. with man's understanding, and with the physical form (Heb 10:5) of man. **Heb 2:17-18:** *17. Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. 18. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted.**

In first Corinthians 15, verses 35 through 54, Paul is discussing resurrection. Physical resurrection of the saints is an event at the end of the world. However, Paul is also mixing in the spiritual resurrection too, an event which can happen to any person at any time when they turn to God. In context, he begins the discussion with two questions: *How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?* (Verse 35) In verses 36-50 he describes the type body, and uses parallel terms regarding the unsanctified man - like corruption, dead, dishonor, weakness, natural, earthly as well as flesh and blood. The changed man is described as raised in glory, power, a spiritual body and heavenly. When considering the symbols as types, these verses describe the inward and outward man. **1 Cor 15:50:** *Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.* Man's corrupted, carnal way of thinking cannot enter into God's way of understanding (His kingdom - cf Isa 55:7-9).

Rom 5:12: *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:* Sin first corrupts the mind, and the natural result is death of the physical body. First there is spiritual death, then physical death; first there is corruption of the mind, then corruption of the physical body in the grave. David is said to have been a man after God's own heart (1 Sam 13:14), yet he saw the corruption of the grave (Act 13:36). The death of man has continued for 6000 years, and will do so until the last generation when a group of people, called the 144,000, will be delivered from the internal corruption, and the corruption of the grave.

In certain scriptures the concept of death and resurrection are so intermingled, that terms like 'corruption' and 'flesh and blood' appear to apply to both the inward and the outward, physical person. This is the case of in the verses of 1 Corinthians 15:50 and Ephesians 6:12. However, flesh and blood relate to the inward corruption of the mind. Not only do we struggle against what we have been taught, but when we share truth with others, they often challenge us with their corrupted way of thinking (flesh and blood). Paul refers to this struggle to help others understand: **Gal 4:19:** *My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.*

Summary: Sinful flesh is the corrupted understanding we have about God, and blood is the soul, it is all of who we have become in this spiritually polluted world. But, note what scripture says about flesh and blood:

Eph 6:12: *Because it is not to us the wrestling against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the authorities, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against the spiritual (authorities) of the wickedness in the heavenly (things). [literal translation of the verse] (Words supplied) Most translations make the heavenly as a place, rather than things. However, Paul defines the use of this word early in **Eph 1:3:** *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly (places) in Christ:* The Greek word translated “heavenly” is an adjective, so various Bible versions add a noun, most of which indicate a physical place, rather than spiritual things. While the blessing resides in Christ, the spiritual blessing with which we are blessed IS NOT located in an unknown physical place. But, it is located between our ears, as thoughts we receive from Christ. Additionally, Christ sitting at the right hand of the Father is not about a physical place, but is a figure of speech indicating that the Son is the power of His Father, Mt 26:64; Mk 14:62. He is also the ‘arm of Yahweh’ Isa 53:1; Jn 12:38. (Cf Eph 1:20 & 2:6, humanity sits at the right hand in Christ)*

We all rule our inward world according to our own understanding. Many times in previous studies it has been shown there are three classes of thinking - sea, land and heavens. The ultimate change that must come in our thinking is the figure of which is the heavens. The principalities and powers are the worldly things that have been ruling in our lives. The concept is ...*cleanse first that which is within...* (Mt 23:25-26).

Isa 13:9-13: *9. Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger; to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. 10. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. 11. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. 12. I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir. 13. Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger.*

The heavens is where the sun, moon and stars reside. **Dan 12:3:** *And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.* It is our understanding of heavenly things which needs cleansing - our understanding of God (sunlight) and the law (moon light) has been shown to be in error . This is why the flesh profits nothing (Jn 6:63). Jesus told Nicodemus: **Jn 3:12:** *If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?* When truth is shared with others, we are dealing with flesh and blood, or the earthly things we carry, which will be changed when we receive the heavenly things which the Father will give to us through His only begotten Son. **Ps 19:1:** *The heavens (spiritual thinking) declare the glory of God; and the firmament (in which are the sun, moon and stars) shows his handy work.*

Jam 1:17-20: *17. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. 18. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures. 19. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: 20. For the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God.*

Amen.