

Supplement to: Are the Dead Really Dead?

Did Jesus Go to some type of purgatory or limbo to preach after He died? What about when Jesus preached to the spirits in prison in 1Peter 3:18-20?

(18) *“For **Christ also suffered** once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive **by the Spirit** (19) **by whom also** He went and preached to the **spirits** in prison (20) who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited **in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared**, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were **saved through water.**”*

*“**Christ also suffered**” The recipients of this letter were either experiencing persecution at the time or knew it was looming. Peter was encouraging them to look to Jesus who could sympathize in their trials (see Heb 4:12, 1Pet 4:12-14).*

*“**by the Spirit**” – Jesus, who was put to death was “made alive “through the power of the Holy Spirit.*

*“**spirits**” – biblically speaking, a “spirit” is in many cases is breath or air we breathe (Ps 146:4, Eccl 12:7) not a essence or energy that leaves our body at death. That is why you need to understand the Bible grammatically before you understand the Bible theologically. No prophet in scripture ever taught that an entity left the body upon death. That was idea was from paganism and came into Christianity through the medieval apostasy.*

*“**by whom also**” – the “whom” in this phrase refers to the Holy Spirit. It was by this same Holy Spirit that Christ spoke to the spirits in prison. Now we need to know: when did he preach to these spirits in prison and who are the spirits in prison? Verse 20 tells us!*

*“**in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared**” – In the days of Noah, “while the ark was being prepared,” the hearts of men and women were only evil continually (Gen 6:5). They were figuratively living in the prison house of sin.*

The same Holy Spirit that raised Jesus from literal death appealed to men and women (see also 1Pet 1:10-12) who were spiritually dead in the days of Noah. So the preaching was actually done while the ark was being built to the antediluvian world. The Holy Spirit spoke through the prophet, Noah preaching the gospel to men and women trapped in spiritual prisons.

*“**saved through water**” – To clarify this point, Peter continues his argument in verse 21 by stating: “There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 3:21). An antitype is a prophetic fulfillment. Peter says that, just as the eight souls were saved “through water” on the ark, in the same way we are now saved by baptism through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The water washed away sin from the earth in Noah’s day, and the baptismal water symbolically washes away our guilt through Christ’s sacrifice. The Holy Spirit is involved in both processes. He preached to the sinners before the flood, and He preaches to us now to bring us to repentance and baptism. There is nothing in this text that says that Jesus left His body and went to some subterranean place to minister to wicked spirits.*

What about the souls underneath the altar in Revelation 6:9-10?

*(9) “When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the **souls** of those who had been **slain for the word of God** and for the testimony which they held. (10) And they **cried with a loud voice**, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and **avenge our blood** on those who dwell on the earth?”*

*“**altar**” – By reason, the sacrifice must take place at the location of the altar, which is where they were killed. The symbolic altar was on earth and not in heaven. The only altar mentioned in Revelation is the altar of incense. The altar represents the church state power that took their lives during the dark ages.*

*“**souls**” – So these “souls” are being mentioned as not being in heaven, but under an altar. There is no other place in the Bible that uses such a phrase. This symbolism is referring to martyrs who gave their lives for the word of God.*

*“**slain for the word of God**” – These souls were martyred during the papal persecution in the middle ages because they would not renounce their faith.*

*“**cried with a loud voice**” –It needs to be noted that this verse is in the context of the seven seals. The verse in question is a part of the fifth seal, which was death on a horse. Revelation is highly symbolic. This is the same type of personification used in Genesis 4:10 when the blood of Able cried out to God from the ground.*

*“**avenge our blood**” – “how long” is answered in the fifth plague of the seven last plagues (see Rev 16:4-7).*

What about absent from the body and present with the Lord in 2Corinthians 5:1-8?

If you have challenges understanding this text or some of Paul's other writings, know that you are in good company. Peter said that Paul could be hard to understand sometimes.

2Peter 3:15-16 "...Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures."

First of all, we have to understand this subject in the light of the entire Bible. Let's have a quick review about what the Bible says about death.

- Eccl 9:5 The dead know nothing.*
- Psalm 146:3-4 When we die our thoughts perish.*
- Job 7:9-10 After death, we never return to the living.*
- Ps 115:17 The dead do not praise the Lord.*
- John 11:12-14 Jesus called death a sleep.*
- John 14:1-3 Jesus is coming back to take us to heaven.*

Second of all, we have to understand "absent from the body" in the light of Paul's other writings. The same Paul who said "Absent from body is to be present with the Lord also said:

2Corinthians 1:8-9 (8) "For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. (9) Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead."

2Corinthians 4:14 "knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you."

Phil 3:10-11 (10) "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death. (11) If, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead."

1Thessalonians 4:16-17 (16) "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. (17) Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall

always be with the Lord."

Paul will not teach that there is a resurrection from the dead in one place and then say our soul goes to heaven at death in another. So what shall we do? What does Paul mean when he says "Absent from body is to be present with the Lord?" Let's go through it together.

*2Corinthians 5:1-8 (1) "For we know that if our **earthly house**, this tent, is destroyed, **we have** a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (2) For in this **we groan**, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our **habitation** which is from heaven, (3) if indeed, having **been clothed**, we shall not be **found naked**. (4) 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**. (5) Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the **Spirit as a guarantee**. (6) So we are **always confident**, knowing that while we are **at home in the body** we are absent from the Lord. (7) For **we walk by faith**, not by sight. (8) We are confident, yes, well pleased **rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.**"*

Paul is contrasting his present mortal body with his future immortal body. Notice the following contrasts.

- Earthly house – building of God.*
- This tent – house not made with hands.*
- In the body – absent from the body.*
- Absent from the Lord – present with the Lord.*

1. "earthly house" – Paul's earthly house or tent or earthly body. When Paul's body is dissolved or dies he will have a building or new body made from God. To compare body with a tent was natural for Paul because he was a tentmaker (see Acts 18:3). A Tent and a body are alike in many respects. The materials come from the earth, both are temporary in nature, and both are easily destroyed.

According to John 1:14, Christ "tented" or "dwelt" among us when He assumed a human body at the time of the incarnation. In 2Peter 1:13-14 Peter also compares his body to a tent. Tent = body is used by three biblical writers: John, Peter, and Paul.

"We have" – He was so confident in hope of resurrection that he speaks of his future house as already his. How do we know? In verse 5, it says that the Holy Spirit is given as an earnest payment or down payment. Thus his earthly tent or body was temporary. How do we know? Verse 1 calls his earthly house or

body his “tent”, which was easily moved. He calls his heavenly house a “building”. This is more stationary or permanent.

2. **“We groan”** – Paul had been a given thorn in flesh (see 2Cor 12:7), which causes to groan. He wanted his heavenly body so bad, he groaned (see Rom 7:24) He knew he had eternity to look forward to with God and his new body that his firm confidence in God led him to look forward to when he could exchange his earthly “tent” his mortal earthly body for his heavenly **“habitation”** – his immortal heavenly body, of which he is comparing to a habitation or a building.

The question is: when will Paul receive his immortal body? 1Thessalonians 4:14-17 gives us a big clue. When do we receive our heavenly body or “building”? 1Corinthians 15:51-53 tells us. We will be “clothed with our habitation, which is from heaven” at the second coming of Jesus. Both 1Thessalonians 4 and 1Cor 15 are describing same event. Notice that the usage of a trumpet is used in both passages, which gives the reader continuity of thought.

3. **“Been clothed”** – that is with either the earthly tent or the heavenly body or habitation.

“Found naked” – In both houses the earthly or heavenly Paul described them as clothes. If he was without clothes or without a house he would be naked. If a house described his earthly or heavenly body, then to be unclothed or naked must simply mean to be dead.

4. **“Being burdened”** – Paul longs to be delivered from the frailties of his body. He’s been beaten, stoned, imprisoned, and shipwrecked for sake of the gospel.

“Unclothed” – To be unclothed is the same as being “found naked” (Verse 3). This simply means to be dead. We can be certain that unclothed state did not involve being with the Lord, since Paul desired it. That is vital to the correct understanding of this passage.

“Further clothed” – Paul wishes to receive his glorious immortal body or to be “further clothed” at the resurrection. Remember that: a tent = earthly body and a building = glorious immortal body. A building is more protective and permanent as compared to a tent.

“Mortality may be swallowed up by life” – When does Paul say that mortality will be swallowed up? In 1Corinthians 15:53-55 Paul tells us this will happen at

the coming of the Lord Jesus. So when will his body be changed? At the second coming of Jesus!

5. **“Spirit as earnest or guarantee”** – The Holy Spirit has been given to us as a promise of citizenship in heaven.

6. **“always confident”** – Paul was very confident in the resurrection when his body would be changed.

“at home in the body” – “Absent from the Lord” or not in His immediate presence. When Jesus comes and when we go to heaven we shall be with Him face to face. Philippians 3:20-21 says that our bodies will be made like Christ’s glorious body.

7. **“We walk by faith”** – What was Paul’s faith and hope in? The second coming of Jesus and the resurrection from the dead! Paul looked forward to the day when he wouldn’t have to walk by faith. He wanted to see Jesus face to face.

8. **“rather”** – Paul would rather be in heaven with Jesus than be here on earth.

“Absent from the body” – To be absent from the body means to be absent from the earthly body or earthly tent with all its infirmities or dead (see Phil 1:21-23). Remember that Paul taught death is like a sleep. After his death, the next thing he would know is being resurrected at the second coming and being with Jesus.

“Present with the Lord” – To be present with the Lord means to be in God’s immediate presence in the glorious immortal body received at the second coming of Jesus. When did Paul expect to be present with the Lord?

1Thessalonians 2:19 “For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?”

What Paul is saying here is really powerful. He is looking forward to the day when Jesus comes so he can be either resurrected or caught up in the clouds and live with Jesus throughout eternity. He also wants to receive his “heavenly habitation” or immortal body, which is given to him when Jesus comes.

There is nothing in this text that says that when we die, our disembodied soul goes to heaven to be with Jesus, rather at the second coming of Jesus, the righteous dead will be raised and the righteous living will be taken to heaven at the same time (see 1Thess 4:16-17).