

# Letters to the church in...



# Corinth

Focus: 2 Corinthians 5:1-21

## Lesson 22-Longing for Heaven and Love Abounding

- **Having experienced the sufferings of this life, Paul longs for His Heavenly home (v.1-8)**
  - (v.1-4)—*longing for that new heavenly body and to have no more of the suffering in this sinful age of earth's history. Paul's saying that we want to be out of this old body, and into the new body...(not to be "unclothed," meaning to lie dead in the grave without a body, but to be "clothed" with our new resurrection bodies!). "...that mortality might be swallowed up of life..." (v.4). Paul is making a clear reference to the resurrection here. That is the time when this matter of being "clothed with our house from heaven" happens! (See Paul's first letter to the Corinthians—1 Cor. 15:52,54). This happens at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, when the Trumpet sounds!*
  - (v.5-8) **"...while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord" (v.6)** (that is, the old perishable body). *"We are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (v.8). This is the one text that many often quote from the English Bible to say that when we die, we go straight to be with the Lord, consciously. They say, "To be absent from the body, is to be present with the Lord" [thus saying that we die and go right to heaven, consciously]. However, to make such a statement goes in contradiction to all the other clear statements in scripture about death (such as Ecclesiastes 9:5,6; Psalm 6:4,5; etc.).*
  - **When does Jesus say we get to be "present with the Lord"? (See John 14:2-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)...** *The Lord promised to come back and retrieve us "so that we can be with him" where He is. "The dead in Christ will rise first...[from the grave]" Then we are all [the living ones] caught up "to meet the Lord together in the air." [none goes before the other to meet Christ!].*
  - **If some living, conscious soul, really went right to be with God in Heaven at the point of death, then what do we do with all these cases?**
    - **David**—In Acts chapter 2 we see that David is "not ascended into the heavens" yet (and we do know that he was saved) (Acts 2:29,34) David is "both dead and buried..."
    - **Elijah and Enoch**—both of these men went straight to Heaven [in their bodily form, with a real human body—they never died—Are we to assume they are there with their bodies, but thousands of others are there with no bodies at all?] (2 Kings 2:11; Genesis 5:24)
    - **Moses**—the Bible tells us that his body was resurrected and He was taken to heaven already. The Lord "...disputed about **the body of Moses**" (Jude 1:9). Moses was resurrected and taken to heaven...why else would the body of Moses be so important? (this is why Moses and Elijah were able to appear with Christ on the mount of Olives...they were both taken to heaven already in bodily form! Ref. Matthew 17:3). Elijah representing those caught up without ever seeing death, and Moses representing those who will be resurrected to see the Lord come—"the dead in Christ" (1 Thess. 4:16).

- **Christ Himself** was resurrected and taken to heaven with a real human body!! Shall He, Enoch, and Elijah have real bodies in heaven, but none else? Certainly not! (ref. Luke 24:39; Acts 1:11).
- **The Bible is too clear...** “...the dead know nothing” (Ecclesiastes 9:5,6) and they “no longer have a part in anything done under the sun.” **Now what about evil spirits, ghosts, haunting, or strange appearances?** Those are clearly the “spirits of demons” (fallen angels). Those are not dead human beings. That’s why God says we are never to mess around or play around with those kind of spiritualistic things—they are very evil (ref. Isaiah 8:19; Revelation 16:14).
- **Now some people wonder about the “thief on the cross” next to Jesus. Didn’t he go with Jesus to be in Paradise (or Heaven) that very day?** (Luke 23:42,43) No. The comma is in the wrong place. Punctuation was not in the original Greek. It was added later and in this particular case is not entirely accurate. It **should read**, “...surely I say unto you today, [although it does not look like I could save a soul] you will be with me in Paradise.” The promise was made that day, but it will not meet its fulfillment until “when...” (v.42) the Lord comes into the fullness of His kingdom. **We know this because Jesus did not go to heaven to see the father on “that day”!! (see John 20:17).** And the thief didn’t even die on the same day as Jesus...that’s why they had to break the thief’s legs (John 19:31-33).
- **Other clear verses:** Paul is dead now, but he expects to have “the crown of righteousness...at that day...” when the Lord comes—and to receive it along with everyone else! (2 Timothy 4:8). If Paul is dead now, why only “at that day,” and not before? See also Hebrews 11:39,40. The entire “hall of faith” is mentioned. But none of them are to receive their rewards “apart from us” (v.40). “...without us they should not be made perfect” (v.40). **Jesus says, “...the day IS coming...! when the dead shall hear his voice (John 5:28,29).** And then they will arise to experience their eternal rewards. **If they must yet rise to experience their eternal rewards, then clearly they do not have them yet!**
- **Whether we are here or there, we want to be accepted of Jesus Christ! (v.9-12)**
  - And so we persuade souls to repent of sin and to seek the Lord while He may yet be found. **All will stand before Christ someday and answer before the Living God! We must answer before the All-intelligent being of the Universe** for what we have chosen to do in this life, and for how we have responded to His offers of Mercy and forgiveness.
- **Living for Christ, and knowing each other, not according to the flesh, but according to the loving and transforming power of Christ (v.13-16)**
  - (v.14) We were all as dead men without Christ. Therefore, **it is the “love of Christ” which constrains and motivates us. It is to be the ruling principle of all our actions!!** God shows us His love in this, “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). God himself has reached out to us. Not we to Him...no, He made the first moves!
  - (v.16) **We are to look at people, not necessarily for what they are today (in sin), but for what they might become in Jesus Christ!!** (God has a far better plan for all our lives!).
- **The transforming righteousness of Christ—a work of reconciling every soul to God (v.17-21)** Let it be our desire to experience and to share God’s loving work of reconciliation with every soul!

*Question (s) for the Heart:*

**Is it your desire to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, and to be daily motivated by His love?**

\_\_\_\_\_ Does it seem clear to you that the dead are in their graves unconsciously awaiting the future resurrection? \_\_\_\_\_