

# LIVING WATERS NEWSLETTER

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## OUR HOPE: THE REDEMPTION OF OUR BODY

That our bodies will be redeemed is, for the most part, an unknown, or at least overlooked, concept in the religious world today. We are accustomed to believing that salvation has little or no relation to the human body. For most Christians salvation concerns the saving of your immortal soul from the sin and pollution of the body, and from eternal damnation in hell. We are taught that the soul's longing is to "fly away when I die, hallelujah by and by" (seeing death as a friend and not an enemy) and winging our souls from the body to heaven above. However Paul never speaks of the salvation of a bodiless soul. His use of the word "soul" (sometimes translated "life") always has reference to embodied persons (I Cor. 15:45; I Thess. 2:8 (translated *life*); 5:23; Rom. 2:9, 13:1). When Peter speaks of "the salvation of your *souls*" in the context this refers to "the living hope" based upon Christ's resurrection, ready to be revealed in the last time" at his appearing (I Pet.1:1-9). When commenting on this passage, N.T. Wright in *Surprised by Hope* stated: "The *soul* here refers not to disembodied inner part of the human being but to what we might call the person or even the personality. And the point in I Peter 1 is that this person, the 'real you' is already being saved and will one day receive the salvation in full bodily form. That is why Peter quite rightly plants the hope for salvation firmly in the resurrection of Jesus. God has, he says, 'given us new birth to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah from the dead.'"

The Scriptures nowhere speak of a bodiless soul. What about I Peter 1 3:19? "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that he might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which he also went and made proclamation to the spirits in prison who were once disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which few, that is eight persons, were brought safely through the water." The word "spirits" is never used to describe dead non-resurrected people. At death the spirit "returns to God who gave it" (Ecc. 12:7; Psalm 136:4). Scripture does, however, use the word to denote angelic beings (Heb. 1:7, 14). Angels did sin and were "committed to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment..." because they "did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode" have "been kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day" (II Pet. 2:4, Jude 6, 7). To these fallen spirits, fallen angels, spirits in prison, Jesus went and made proclamation. In I Peter 3:19 the probable reference is not to glad tidings, but the act of Christ after his resurrection in proclaiming his victory to fallen angelic beings. We are not told what Jesus did during the forty days between his resurrection and ascension. It was not while his body was in the tomb because he had "given up his spirit" (John 19:30) and the spirit returns to God who gave it (Ecc. 12:7). We should not read into this event Jesus preaching to dead people in prison, without resurrection. It is not about dead people who exists outside the body, but about spirits, angelic beings in prison, in Tartarus, bound in everlasting chains of darkness because of their sin in the days of Noah.

Most of the commentaries, upon which many preachers depend, teach a separation of the soul and body at death. An example is *The Pulpit Commentary* in which "The Very Rev" R. Finlayson wrote: "Between death and resurrection, we are to be in an incomplete state, in that soul and body are not united. Our Lord's identification with us extended to his being for a determined time in this state. The extinguishing of his life in the flesh was immediately followed by a quickening in that which could not die, and had a separate existence." B. C Caffin in the same commentary wrote: "Our Lord was 'quickened in the spirit' so shall it shall be with his chosen. From the moment of death they are blessed; for they shall be with him in Paradise." The problem with these statements is they contradict other scripture.

At this point we should consider the passage saying: "Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord...to be absent from the body (is) to be at home with the Lord." (II Cor. 5:6, 8). Does this not mean the soul leaves the body in order to be present with the Lord? We must consider the context of these passages and relate them to what the Apostle states in other passages. Chapter five is connected with the context of chapter four. A.W. Bullinger in *The Companion Bible* states: "It is little less than a crime for anyone to pick out certain words and frame them into a sentence, not only disregarding the scope and context, but ignoring the other words in the verse, and quote the words 'absent from the body, present with the Lord' with the view of dispensing with the hope of the resurrection (which is the subject of the whole passage) as though it were unnecessary; and as though 'present with the Lord' is obtainable without it." In the original text there is no chapter break between chapter 4 and chapter 5. What Paul says, then, in chapter five must be seen in the light of the subject he is discussing in chapter 4 which is stated in verse 14: "knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you." Paul had written to the same people in I Corinthians 15 concerning the resurrection at the coming of Christ. The language used in II Cor. 5 is also used in I Cor. 15. James D.G. Dunn in *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* on this passage states: "The expectation is the same as in I Cor. 15:53, 54, though here the hope of resurrection is imaged as putting on a further garment. Paul envisions the incompleteness in the process of salvation which can only be resolved by the new body of resurrection."

Note: I Cor. 15:54: But when this perishable will have *put on* imperishable, and this mortal shall have *put on* immortality, then will come about the saying that is written "Death is swallowed up in victory'." II Cor. 5:2, 4: "For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, longing to be *clothed* with our dwelling from heaven...for indeed while we are in this tent we groan being burdened not because we do not want to be *unclothed* but to be *clothed*, in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life." The word *put on* in I Corinthians 15 is the same word as *clothed* in II Corinthians 5. Further: I Cor. 15:54: "then will come about the saying that is written: 'Death is *swallowed up* in victory'." II Cor. 5:4: "We do not want to be *unclothed* but *clothed* in order that what is mortal may be *swallowed up* in

life.” I Corinthians 15 shows that being “absent from the body and present with the Lord” takes place at the resurrection and not at death.

Another passage that we should consider is Philippians 1:23: “But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ.” The key to understanding this passage is the phrase: “depart and be with Christ.” The way we should interpret Scripture is to compare Scripture with Scripture. The Scriptures are their own best interpreters. Paul will not write one thing to one church and contradict it by writing something else to another church. I Thessalonians 4:13-17 Paul says he does “not want you to be uninformed about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope.” He does not comfort them and tell them not to grieve because the souls of loved ones are enjoying conscious bliss with the Lord in heaven. Rather he explains that “those who have fallen asleep” will be resurrected from the dead at the resurrection when the Lord returns. He states that “if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, God will bring with him those that have fallen asleep in Jesus.” The popular belief is that those whom “God will bring with Him” are the souls of those who have gone on to be with the Lord. Notice the words “*even so*”. This connects “if we believe that Jesus died and rose again” with “God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.” That is, if we believe Jesus rose again, *even so*, in the very same way God brought him from the dead, He will bring with him (Christ) by resurrection, those who are asleep in Jesus. This interpretation is proven by noting that the term “*even so*” is used to mean “in the same way” in other passages: John 3:14: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, *even so* must the Son of man be lifted up.” John 5:21, 26: “For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, *even so* the Son also gives life to whom he wishes...just as the Father has life in Himself, *even so* He gave the son to have life in himself.” Rom. 6:11: “...the life he lives, he lives to God, *even so* consider yourselves to be dead unto sin but alive to God.” I Thess. 4:17 states that when the Lord descends from heaven “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*.” This shows we will be with Lord through resurrection at his coming. Paul’s “desire to depart and be with Christ” (Phil. 1:23) would be realized in resurrection. When a person “departs” the next thing he knows is the judgment (Heb. 9:27), and the judgment is in the last day (Acts 17:31).

That for which the Christian is eagerly awaiting is not to “go to heaven”, a phrase not found in Scripture, but “the redemption of our body, for in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one also hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it” (Rom. 8:23-25). God has “granted to us *everything* pertaining to life and godliness” (II Pet. 1:3); and “has blessed us with *every* spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). The only thing God has not given us is our new bodies which will be given at our resurrection at the appearing of Christ (I Cor. 15:51-57). This is when we will receive “the redemption of our bodies” and this is our hope (Rom. 8:23-25). Our bodily redemption is what “groaning” Christians are waiting for. The Epistles of Paul speaks many times of our redemption (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Rom. 3:24; I Cor. 1:30), but our bodies are “dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of

righteousness” and we are awaiting the appearing of Christ and the resurrection when “the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead...will give life to your mortal bodies” (Rom. 8:10, 11). The work of redemption does not mean merely the salvation of the soul or spirit; it includes the redemption of the body. Romans 8:23 shows that redemption applies to the whole person including the body. The scripture never speaks of glorified saints apart from the body. George Eldon Ladd in *A Theology of the New Testaments* states it this way: “The coming of Christ will mean the transformation of our lowly bodies into the likeness of his glorious body (Phil. 3:21). The basic argument of I Corinthians 15 is directed against a Greek view of the survival of personality apart from any form of bodily existence. Resurrection life will be bodily life and Paul describes it as a ‘spiritual body’ (I Cor. 15:44). This involves a real body, however different it may be from our mortal physical bodies.”

When Christ appears he will “transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of his glory, by the exertion of the power that he has even to subject all things to himself” (Phil. 3:21). When Christ was raised from the dead it was hard even for his Apostles, to believe: “And when they saw him, they worshiped him, but some were doubtful” (Mt. 28:17). “...And when they heard that he was alive, they refused to believe it...And afterward he appeared to the eleven, 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” (Mark 16: 11, 14). “...O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all the prophets have spoken! (Lk. 24:26) “...Thomas: “Unless I shall 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” (Jn. 20:25). When Jesus was resurrected he had the same bodily appearance he had when he was alive, and even had the nail prints in his hands and the result of the wound in his side. He appeared in this way in order for his disciples to know it was actually the same Jesus who had been with them for over three years. It is his “*body of glory*” to which we will be “*conformed*” (Phil. 3:21). In I John 3:2 it is stated: “Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when he appears, we shall be like him, because we shall see him just as he is.” John had seen him as he was after his resurrection and at his ascension, but now he says “we shall see him just as he is.” So “it does not yet appear what we shall be” until we see him just as he is in his “body of glory” (Phil. 3:21). The Holy Spirit could not be given until Jesus was glorified (John 7:36) and it was after he ascended that he sent the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4). Had he not ascended and entered into his glory the Helper could not have come (John 16:7; Luke 24:26). It was only after Jesus was glorified that the apostles could understand the things written of him (John 12:16). It is “when we see him just as he is” (I Jn. 3:2) that “the body of our humble state will be transformed into conformity with the body of his glory” (Phil 3:21).

Not only will our bodies be redeemed but the earth, having been placed under a curse (Gen. 3:17), will also be redeemed. “For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. The creation was subjected to futility in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Rom. 8:19-21). The Christian in a redeemed body will live, not in a gold city, but in a redeemed earth.