



“And I knew such a man,
(whether in the body, or out of the
body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) (2 Cor. 12:3)

PAUL'S VISION

To understand Paul's "absent from the body and present with the Lord", we must consider some of his other experiences. In 2 Corinthians 12:1-10, Paul tells about receiving a vision of the Kingdom.

The revelation was so realistic that he was not able to tell whether he was transported bodily to the Kingdom period, or whether his mind was being influenced while in a trance. He must have wondered if he was dreaming, or was he actually taken into the future?

THE THIRD HEAVEN

Paul, in vision, was "caught up to the third heaven" (v.2), and "caught up into paradise" (v.4)

Peter helps us to understand that the third heaven is a time when there will be a new heaven and a new earth "wherein dwelleth righteousness." (2 Peter 3: 13)

Peter is teaching us about three separate periods of time. The third heaven and earth is the period of the coming Kingdom of God. (See 2 Pet. 3)

PARADISE

Paul also mentioned that he was caught up to paradise. This word relates to the Garden of Eden. Eden was a paradise until sin came into the world. Man was cast out of this paradise, and not allowed to eat of the Tree of Life.

It is evident that the entire plan of God is centered around the sacrifice of Christ, which would take away the sin and make it possible for men to return to the garden restored, the paradise in Eden. In the Kingdom, the entire earth will gradually become a paradise, filled with the glory of God.

THE TREE OF LIFE

This same hope is spoken of in Revelation 2, where we are told: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." (v.7)

OUT OF THE BODY?

After Paul's vision of the Kingdom of God, He was seriously afflicted in his natural body to help him control his pride. This "thorn in his flesh" would certainly increase his appreciation for his future hope. (See 2 Cor 12:7-10).

Paul eventually gained his wish to be absent from his natural body of pain. He fell asleep in the Lord and is resting in the dust.

He died in the hope of the resurrection, with an earnest desire to be found worthy to be present with the Lord in the same Kingdom that he had visited in his remarkable vision.

Things Concerning

The Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ

Volume 4 No 10

C10-01

“Willing rather to be absent from the body,
and to be present with the Lord. (2 Cor. 5:8)

HARD TO BE UNDERSTOOD

Absent from the body and present with the Lord. These are no doubt among the words of Paul that the Apostle Peter found to cause confusion for some.

In 2 Peter 3, Peter relates how that Paul was speaking of "some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." (v. 16)

There are too many false teachers, with eager listeners, who have distorted the word of Paul.

They think that Paul was speaking about the soul leaving the body to be with the Lord in heaven. This concept is not consistent with the true teaching of the Bible.

IN THE BODY

In the Book of Job we learn that it is not our hope to be absent from our bodies when we are present with the Lord. We read:

“For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: (Job 19:25-26)

These verses from Job also teach us that we will see our redeemer in the flesh, and on the earth.

The Bible teaches that our hope is in the resurrection of the body at the return of Christ to this earth. (See 1st Corinthians 15)

In 2nd Corinthians 5, Paul spoke about the judgment that would take place after the resurrection, in the same context as his "absent from the body" phrase.

“Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” (2 Cor 5: 9-10)

WHAT DID HE MEAN?

So what did Paul mean when he said "absent from the body?" If we read the entire context, we see that in verse 4, Paul had an earnest desire to be made immortal.

As long as Paul remained mortal, he would be subject to all of the consequences of sin, including the suffering and pain, that will lead eventually to death.

He looked forward to the establishment of the Kingdom of God on this earth. He hoped that he would be accepted at the judgment of Christ, and that he would be granted immortality.

Paul longed to be absent from his body of death.

He looked forward with the hope that his body would be changed and that he would have a new immortal body, so that he could be present with the Lord in his Kingdom.

If you would like to have a free monthly copy of "Things Concerning" sent to a friend please let us know. VISIT OUR WEB SITE: www.christadelphian-advocate.org

LOCAL CONTACT:

Send all Correspondence to:

"Things Concerning"

27 Delphian Rd

Springfield, VT 05156

e-mail: jimillay@sover.net

“There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.” (1 Cor. 15: 44)

RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

Paul spoke about being absent from the body in his second letter to the Corinthians. In his first letter, he had revealed certain truths about the body. These truths must be taken into consideration when we study Paul's difficult teachings.

In 1st Corinthians 15, Paul spoke in detail about the resurrection of the body.

This resurrection is our only hope for life beyond the grave. Paul taught plainly that if there was no resurrection, our faith was vain and those who have fallen asleep in Christ are perished. (1 Cor.15:13-23)

DUST THOU ART

The miracle of the resurrection is something that is difficult for us to comprehend.

When Jesus died and was in the grave for three days, his flesh did not corrupt, that the scriptures might be fulfilled. (See Psalm 16:10) It was the power of God that brought him back to life, through the blood of the everlasting covenant. (See Rom. 1:4, Heb. 13:20)

If this was a great miracle, then think how much power will be used to resurrect the saints of old at the return of Christ. Their natural bodies have long been corrupted in the grave, and all that remains is their dust in the ground.

As part of his punishment, Adam was told “Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return,” (Gen. 3:19) We are all subject to this sentence.

HOW ARE THE DEAD RAISED UP

1st Corinthians 15 is filled with information about the miracle of the resurrection. This teaching was the cornerstone of the gospel of salvation, but it provoked many questions.

“How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?” (v.35) Paul answered this question by explaining that each seed has its own body.

The essence of his argument was that we will be resurrected in the same body that we had when we died. This means that we will still be the same person, and until we are judged, we will still have a natural body; which is mortal and subject to death.

NATURAL BODY-SPIRITUAL BODY

Paul understood and taught that there is a difference between the natural body that we now possess, and the spiritual body into which we hoped to be changed.

Paul spoke of this anticipated change as being “further clothed, so that what is mortal might be swallowed up of life.” (2 Cor. 5: 4 NRSV)

At present, we have a natural body. **If** we are found acceptable at the judgment seat of Christ, we will be changed, or “further clothed” with a spiritual body. (2 Cor. 5: 4, 10)

“Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” (1 Cor. 15:51-55)

“The soul that sinneth, it shall die.”
(Ezekiel 18:20)

BODY AND SOUL

We could not complete a discussion on the natural body without considering the word soul. There are so many “Christians” who have been deceived into thinking that the soul is something eternal that is separate from the body.

The concept of the immortality of the soul is not something that is taught in the Bible. It was rooted in Greek mythology and was adopted into Christianity by church leaders who were influenced by false teachers.

FALSE TEACHERS

Paul and Peter both warned of these false teachings that would distort the truth of the gospel.

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.” (2 Tim. 4: 3-4)

“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.” (2 Peter 2:1)

TEACHING LIES

The first lie was told by the serpent in the Garden of Eden. God had told Adam that if he ate of the tree of knowledge he would “surely die.”

The serpent lied to Eve and told her that she would not die. This same lie is being repeated by all who teach that man has a never dying soul.

Supplement to The Christadelphian Advocate

SOUL DIES

The quotation in the box at the top of this page is taken from Ezekiel 18. It clearly demonstrates that whatever the word soul may refer to, it is something that is mortal and dying.

So what is a soul? If we start in the beginning, we will learn that when God first created Adam in that Garden of Eden, he was made a “living soul.”

“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” (Gen. 2:7)

We should be able to deduct from this verse that the word soul refers to the whole man, and not to some invisible part.

(SOUL) NEPHESH

The word soul is taken from the Hebrew “NEPHESH”, WHICH MEANS: A BREATHING CREATURE. IT CAN REFER TO A BEAST AS WELL AS A MAN.

THERE IS NO INDICATION OF IMMORTALITY ever being associated with the word soul in scripture.

IMMORTALITY

IMMORTALITY IS NOT A PRESENT POSSESSION OF MAN. It will only be granted by grace to those who are able to overcome and then allowed to eat of the tree of life in the Kingdom of God. (See Revelation 2: 7)

For now, immortality is something possessed only by:

GOD

1 Tim. 6:15-16

JESUS

1 Corinthians 15:22-23

THE ANGELS

Luke 20:35-36