

Series: The Glory of God in the Person of Christ #1265

**Title: *Body and Soul in Heaven*
*Revelation 1***

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. Let's end this week tying together my reflections on our journey through Revelation chapter 1 in which we met the risen and ascended Jesus Christ indwelling His glorified body in heaven, this according to the vision Jesus gave the Apostle John, via the angel. Studying Revelation 1 reminded me much of this reality: as Christ was raised from the dead, in His bodily, physical resurrection, so too will I be raised from the dead, as will you also.

I want to talk today about what happens to Christians when we die. I could also speak about what happens to people who are not Christians when they die, but it is Friday and I am running out of time. Let me just insert this: *all* people are resurrected. Those who have faith in Christ are resurrected to eternal life in heaven. And those who have *no* faith in Christ are resurrected to judgment and eternal torment in hell. The Bible is clear about this. Listen to Jesus in John chapter 5, verses 28 and 29, **"An hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear [God's] voice, ²⁹ and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment."** (John 5, verses 28-29.)

All people will be resurrected from the dead. As Thomas Watson wrote (quote), "We are not so sure to rise out of our beds as we are to arise out of our graves (*Body of Divinity*, 305)." True! There is a guarantee for us to rise out of the grave, but no guarantee we will live to see tomorrow. And the question I want to ask is: what happens to Christians when we die? Answer: there is a separation of our soul/our spirit from our physical body. The soul/the spirit of a Christian goes *immediately* into the presence of the Lord Jesus in heaven, while the physical body goes into the grave (perhaps in a casket or being cremated in an urn or the ashes scattered somewhere). The point is the soul/the spirit is with the Lord, but the body stays here on earth.

Listen to 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 8, **"We are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord."** The Apostle makes it clear. We (meaning our soul/our spirit is at home with the Lord, but we are absent our bodies). In Philippians 1, verse 23 Paul says that he has **"the desire to depart and be with Christ."** Meaning, when he dies Paul anticipates immediately seeing the Lord and living in Christ's presence.

Listen to the Puritan theologian Thomas Watson again in his outstanding book, *A Body of Divinity*. He writes, "When the bodies of the saints are in the sepulchre, their souls are in paradise; the soul does not sleep in the body, but 'returns to God who gave it.' The soul immediately partakes of those joys the blessed angels do. When the body returns to dust, the soul returns to rest; when the body is sleeping, the soul is triumphing; when the body is buried, the soul is crowned. As the spies were sent before to taste the fruits of the land, so at death the soul is sent before into heaven, to taste of the fruit of the holy land (*A Body of Divinity*, 309)." End quote. That's lovely.

But, will Christians be without our bodies forever in heaven? Answer: no. How so? Our bodies will rise from the dead. This is our resurrection. When? In the future, at the rapture of the church. I have two Scripture passages to share with you that proves this. The first is back in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and verses 50-54. 1 Corinthians 15, verses 50-54.

⁵¹Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, ⁵²in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'" (1 Corinthians 15, verses 50-54.)

What is Paul the Apostle saying? At the trumpet call of God, an unknown-to-us still future time, bodies of the Christians will rise from the dead. Our physical bodies that are now perishable will then be made imperishable. Our bodies that are now mortal will then be made immortal. Oh yes, friends! Death is swallowed up in victory! Physical death has no hold on the Christian, because our physical bodies will at this moment be changed, and in just the short twinkling of an eye – our body will reunite with our soul/with our spirit and *then* we will live in the new heaven and the new earth body and soul – *forever*.

The moment of our resurrection is also described by this same Apostle Paul over in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, verses 13-18. He writes words of comfort to those believers who have dead loved ones. And he assures them that those who are already dead when the Lord descends from heaven with a shout (that trumpet call), they will be resurrected first, and then they who are alive at this rapture, this snatching away of Christians, they will follow. Just listen as I read 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, beginning in verse 13.

“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep [as I said last time, fallen asleep is another way to speak of those who have died] **“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.**

Verse 16, **¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.”** (That was 1 Thessalonians 4, verses 13-18.)

Notice how the Apostle affirms that Jesus died and rose again, therefore believers who die will rise again. When the Lord comes in the clouds, the dead in Christ will rise first and then we who are alive will leave this earth to meet the Lord in the air and at this point our soul/our spirit that has already been with the Lord if we are dead, will be reunited with our (now perfected) physical bodies and so we shall always be with the Lord. Soul/spirit and body are together again forever. And, this will be a physical body without any pain, blemish, or deformity! No matter how bad your body feels today, in heaven you will live in *perfection*. Your body will be perfect.

Thomas Watson again (quote), “If the soul should go to heaven, and not the body, then a believer would only be half saved (306).” He continues, “The body shall rise again...we shall not be in all our glory, till our bodies are reunited to our souls. Oh consider what joy there will be at the reuniting of the body and the soul at the resurrection...How will the body and the soul greet one another! What a welcome will the soul give to the body (308).”

Brothers and sisters, in heaven there will not be a bunch of body-less souls sitting around on clouds. No! Everyone in heaven will be fully clothed in a body, just as Jesus is in Revelation chapter 1. Here we have an earthly body and there will have a heavenly body. Therefore, we should not sin with our bodies here, but honor God with our bodies now, as we will honor Him in-person there, body and soul/body and spirit.

The resurrection of Christ and of us is *very* important. Revelation 1 reminded of its value. I hope this has been helpful for you. As Paul also said in 1 Corinthians, “if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain,” but thanks be to God Christ was raised and our faith is *not* in vain. Join me again on Monday because God Is.

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