

REDEEMING THE TIME

“Concerning Them which Are Asleep”

Introduction

The idiom of sleep for death is used throughout the entire Bible. “What happens when I die?” seems more a motivator of religious contemplation than “how should I live?” In some ways, Christianity is no different.

What is the central theme of Christianity? The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:2-4

2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: KJV¹

Paul doesn't mention the Lord's manner of life, His ministry or teaching. Simply put, the Gospel is that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again.

What is the primary promise of Christianity? Eternal Life!

John 5:24

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

John 3:15-16

15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 10:28

And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

In light of this, how are we to deal with the obvious death of loved ones in this life who we know belonged to Jesus?

1 Thessalonians 4:13

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

God would not have us to be ignorant of those which are asleep. This implies that understanding with regard to their state must be possible. That this is true is shown immediately by the verses that follow.

¹ All references are from the King James Version of the Bible unless otherwise noted.

1 Thessalonians 4:14-18

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

These words are to be a comfort. Those who are asleep are with the Lord, for it says that He is going to bring them with Him! But we get a little ahead of ourselves.

Not only is knowledge regarding death and resurrection possible, it is supposed to be a life pursuit.

Philippians 3:10-11

10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

Paul rejected all the accomplishments of his former life and considered them dung in comparison to the pursuit of knowing Jesus. And not just knowing Jesus, but knowing the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings. This is nothing less than understanding death and the life that comes afterward. Jesus is our primary example of death and resurrection and we are admonished to understand His way in both. This study is an effort in that direction, though far from the full journey.

To properly understand death and resurrection, both His and ours, we need to understand the design, dominion, and destiny of man.

I. What Is Man that Thou Art Mindful of Him?

Psalms 8:3-6

3 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;

4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

5 For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.

6 Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:

We were made to have dominion over all the works of His hands (including those mentioned in verse 3)! This is an awesome and daunting truth. When we consider the heavens and the expanse of the universe, it is pretty humbling. We are very small in comparison. Yet we

were made a little lower than God (the Hebrew word translated “angels” in verse 5 is ‘elohiym) and made to have dominion over His works!

This seems very hard to believe, particularly in our present condition. Man has a hard time ruling himself or a country, let alone the earth or the cosmos. Even so, we were made to have dominion. Sin has interfered with God’s original design. We need to look at the construction of man because the Last Adam came to rectify that which was destroyed by the first Adam (see I Cor. 15:45; Rom. 5:17).

1. His Design – Gen. 2:7

Genesis 2:7

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.

A. Body – “formed man of the dust of the ground.”

The Lord God formed the body of man of the dust of the ground. The Psalmist poetically refers to the womb as “the lowest parts of the earth” in Psalm 139:15. It was in this earth, the womb of Mary, that the Father prepared a body for the Son.

Hebrews 10:5

Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:

B. Spirit – “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life”

God breathing the breath of life is idiomatic of His life giving operation in the Spirit. It was via the Holy Spirit that the Self-humbling Son entered the body prepared for Him.

Luke 1:35

And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

C. Soul – “and man became a living soul”

When a spirit occupies the body, a soul is the result². It is the interface between flesh and spirit. Understanding the difference between soul and spirit is essential to understanding much of the economy of God. We are told that the Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, can divide soul and spirit (Heb. 4:12). If we don’t follow His example, many issues in the word of God will remain muddy for us.

Luke 1:31

² That is so long as we are talking about a body that has been fitted for a particular spirit, as in the body of a man for the spirit of man. The invasion of the body by a demon (a spirit being) does not create an adjunct soul. But it does cause interference with the proper operation of the soul that is in the body and if it is a spirit of infirmity, the operation of the body as well. What if that body is dead or lifeless, you might ask. Now that is a question worth pondering.

And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

Technically speaking, conception occurs when seed encounters egg. In the Incarnation (John 1:14), the Spirit that is the Son entered the egg in Mary's womb ("a body hast thou prepared for me") under the auspices of the Holy Spirit and the resulting soul was (and is) Jesus ben David, ben Abraham (Matt. 1:1). He was (and is) fully man and fully God.

We are truly wonderfully and fearfully made:

Psalms 139:14-16

14 I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.

15 My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

16 Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.

The term "curiously wrought" in verse 15 is translated as "needlework" in Exodus 26:36; 27:16; and 28:39. It refers to the manufacture of the door of the tabernacle, the gate of its court, and the girdle of the high priest. Needlework is a little misleading. The Hebrew term implies a weaving process by which raised patterns are produced. The making of these things required the Spirit of God and wisdom to produce (Ex. 31:1-6). This is the type of process by which God describes our formation in the womb, done with skill and wisdom by the Spirit of God!

Ecclesiastes 11:5

As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all.

I used to think that science had at least figured out the physical growth part of fetal development, even if they didn't know how life actually entered it (or admitted to it!). But such is not the case.

Rupert Sheldrake, in his book A New Science of Life, deals with some of the problems of morphogenesis which he defines as "the 'coming-into-being of characteristic and specific form in living organisms.'" ³ Following are four of the major ones: ⁴

- 1) That form even comes into being at all is a problem. The process is epigenetic: new structures appear which cannot be explained in terms of the

³ Rupert Sheldrake, *A New Science of Life: The Hypothesis of Morphic Resonance*, Park Street Press, Rochester, Vermont, © 1981, 1987, 1995 by Rupert Sheldrake, p. 19

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 19-21

unfolding or growth of structures which are already present in the egg at the beginning of development.

- 2) That developing systems are able to regulate. If any part of a developing system is taken away or added, the system continues to develop in such a way that a more or less normal structure is produced. For instance, removing one cell at the two-celled stage of a sea-urchin embryo causes not a half sea-urchin to develop, but a small one. Conversely, a fusion of two young embryos causes a large sea-urchin to develop.
- 3) That organisms are able to regenerate to replace or restore damaged structures.
- 4) The simple fact of reproduction is a problem as well, for a detached part of the parent somehow becomes a new organism (a part becomes a whole).

Biology has come a long way as a science to describe much of what goes on in the natural world, but a clear answer to morphogenesis has not been provided yet. Why do organisms take on the forms they have? Or as the Preacher would ask, "How are the bones formed in the womb?" Genetics, you might say. But even there, the answer comes up short.

"Mechanists [ascribe morphogenesis] to *genetic programmes* [sic.]...but the genetic programme must involve something more than the chemical structure of DNA, because identical copies of DNA are passed on to all cells; if all cells were programmed identically, they could not develop differently."⁵

"So far, there has been a set of one-to-one relationships: a gene is 'switched on' by a specific stimulus; the DNA is transcribed into RNA; and the RNA is translated into a particular sequence of amino acids, a polypeptide chain. But now this simple causal sequence comes to an end. How do the polypeptide chains fold up into the characteristic three-dimensional structures of proteins? How do the proteins give the cells their characteristic structures? How do cells aggregate together to give tissues of characteristic structure? And so on. These are the problems of morphogenesis proper: the synthesis of specific polypeptide chains provides the basis for the metabolic machinery and the structural materials on which morphogenesis depends. The polypeptide chains and the proteins into which they fold up are undoubtedly necessary for morphogenesis; but what actually determines the patterns and structures into which the proteins, cells and tissues combine? The mechanistic assumption is that all this can be explained in terms of physical interactions, and that it takes place spontaneously, given the right proteins in the right places at the right times and in the right sequence. **At this crucial stage, mechanistic biology effectively abdicates, and the problem of morphogenesis is simply left to physics.**"⁶

In other words, they don't really know how organic bodies (plants, animals, and man) take on the forms that they do. Even knowing the entire human genome doesn't allow them to predict exactly what shape a person will take or, more importantly, why. They

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 21, emphasis in original.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 40-41, emphasis mine.

simply assume that the process is somehow propagated by quantum processes if the conditions are perfect for it!

The truth is that all of life is directed by God. He not only formed us in the womb, He gave us our spirit.

Zechariah 12:1

The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.

Isaiah 44:24

Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself;

Not only does He claim to have formed us in the womb, He makes the argument in Isaiah that His knowledge of a developing embryo is the primer to His knowledge of the process of history (read vs. 25-28!).

In a real sense, God has crafted us in our mother's womb and formed the spirit of man within us. But also in a real sense, we have inherited both from Adam. If we were each a special creation in the spirit, how or why would the sin of Adam attach to us? No, we were in him and thus are born in iniquity (Ps. 51:5). These things are marvelous indeed and wonderful to contemplate. May the Lord grant us wisdom in all of it.

As we proceed, we need to understand that man is a tripartite being. He is spirit, soul, and body (1Thes. 5:23). Not understanding this causes most of the confusion with regard to the second coming of Christ and the state of the dead. That being said, a threefold chord is not easily broken. To be complete, man requires all his parts. If you have just his body, you don't have the entire man. You have a corpse! In the same manner, the soul on its own nor the spirit on its own constitute the man entire. Having a body is part of our design and we need it to exercise our dominion and fulfill our destiny.

2. His Dominion – Gen. 1:26, 28

Genesis 1:26, 28

26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

As has been stated above, man was made to rule. God placed him on earth to exercise dominion over it and subdue it.

Luke 1:32

He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

The Lord Jesus came to rule as well. The time will come when He will sit on David's throne in Jerusalem and rule the Universe.

3. His Destiny – Gen. 1:27

Genesis 1:27

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

Man was created in His image, thus it was intended that he should live forever. The intention of eternal life for man is seen in that death is given as the punishment for sin.

Genesis 2:17

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

One is to suppose that if Adam had not sinned, death would not have entered into the world. We know that from God's perspective, Adam died before the day ended because he died at 930 years of age. But I also believe that he died in his spirit that very day. What had been enlightened fellowship became religious fear because of a darkened spirit.

Gen 3:22-24

22 And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:

23 Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

24 So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

God takes further action by denying Adam and Eve access to the tree of life (or anybody else for that matter!), thus ensuring their physical death. That the tree of life was designed to keep their flesh alive can be seen from the fact that God was concerned that they would take and eat from it. Taking is done with the hand and eating with the mouth. It is a physical process for a physical benefit.

As with the first Adam, the destiny of the Messiah is to live forever and rule.

Luke 1:33

And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

Revelation 22:3

And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:

II. Of Sleep and Seeds

1. Unless a Grain of Wheat Falls – John 12:23-25

John 12:23-25

23 And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.

24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

25 He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

Jesus compares death to the process of seed germination. The Bible and science have some things to tell us about seeds.

A. The body that shall be – 1 Cor. 15:35-38

1 Corinthians 15:35-38

35 But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?

36 Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:

37 And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:

38 But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.

Jesus focused on the fruit that the seed produced. Here, Paul focuses on the form. The form of the plant that is born is far different from the seed that was planted. That which is born from that which died is greater, grander, and more glorious. This is the nature of resurrection. And this principle doesn't just involve seeds and dead bodies.

Whenever we die to ourselves to serve Christ, He resurrects in our lives something far more glorious than the part we put to death. We move from unclean and inordinate affection to holy and beloved; from anger to bowels of mercies; from wrath to kindness; from malice to humbleness of mind and meekness; from blasphemy to longsuffering and thanksgiving; from filthy communication to songs, hymns and spiritual songs; and from lying to the word of Christ!⁷

B. Requirements for seed germination:

⁷ Colossians 3:5-16

Certain elements must be present for seeds to germinate. Most seeds have within themselves germination inhibitors like abscisic acid which these elements help break down.⁸ The primary conditions necessary for germination are as follows:

- i. *A period of dormancy – a time lying in the ground (i.e. burial), particularly in the cold season.*
- ii. *Scarification – a scarring of thick skinned seeds (by His stripes we were healed). This usually occurs by animals scratching or biting the seeds while consuming the exterior fruit or other environmental factors like the seeds being beaten against the rocks by a pounding surf or a rolling river.⁹*
- iii. *Temperature – Correct temperature is necessary for germination. After the dormant period of cold that breaks down inhibitors, the warming spring wakes the seed up. “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light” Eph. 5:14.*
- iv. *Water – Water is always needed to allow vigorous metabolism to begin. It is also sometimes needed to leech away germination inhibitors within the seed. Water is used as a symbol for both the Spirit and the Word. They not only leech away the things that inhibit us from exhibiting the character of Christ, they also provide the necessary ingredients for a vigorous metabolism, for it is the Spirit that quickeneth (John 6:63).*
- v. *Oxygen – Oxygen is needed for life. In a fantastic revelation vision of a resurrection, Ezekiel is commanded to prophesy to the wind.*

Ezekiel 37:9-10

9 Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.

10 So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.

As seeds need oxygen, we will need God’s breath life to abandon the grave. What a glorious day it will be to stand in His exceeding great army!

2. She Is not Dead, but Sleepeth – Luke 8:52-56

Luke 8:52-56

52 And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth.

53 And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead.

54 And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise.

55 And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat.

56 And her parents were astonished: but he charged them that they should tell no man what was done.

⁸ From “Germination of Seeds”, 7 August 2003, <http://users.rcn.com/jkimball.ma.ultranet/biologypages/g/germination.html>

⁹ Koning, Ross E. “Seed Germination”, under Thick Seed Coat, <http://koning.ecsu.ctstateu.edu/seed/seed.html>

This scene is almost comical, depending on who you think is playing the part of the fool! Jairus had come to Jesus in desperation. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and pleaded with Him to heal his daughter. She was his only child and she was on her death bed. The Master agrees to go with him to his house, but along the way, a woman grabs the corner of His garment. This pulls Jesus up short. "Who touched me," He asks. The comedy has begun. They are being thronged and pressed by the crowd and Jesus wants to know who touched Him. "Easier to say who didn't touch You, Lord," His disciples seem to reply.

I think we lose sight of how wonderfully odd Jesus must have seemed to His companions. We are too used to being in on the joke. We get to see the story from the outside. We know the woman with the issue of blood touched Him. When Peter says, "Master, the multitudes throng and press You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'"¹⁰ we wonder why he doesn't get it. "Come on, Peter," we want to say, "get with the program. You're walking with Jesus, remember?"

To get a fuller impact of the narrative, I think we should take a little of our own advice and take a walk with Jesus. We need to get on the dusty ground with the rest of the disciples and envision the scene as they saw it. I think when we do, we will begin to understand why Jesus so amazed and confounded His contemporaries (something He continues to do). Absent a wider perspective, many of His actions and pronouncements seem not just odd, but even bizarre at times.

A miracle has happened. A woman who has been sick for many years is healed by simply grabbing a hold of the Master's clothes!¹¹ In the middle of all this commotion, a messenger reaches Jairus and tells him not to bother with the Master any longer. It is too late. The child is dead. But Jesus does not allow the message go unanswered. "Fear not," He says, "Believe only and she shall be made whole." What went through the synagogue ruler's mind at that moment? "I know you healed the woman, but she's alive. How can you make my dead daughter whole?" Perhaps, maybe – whatever he was thinking, Scripture is silent. But he did take Jesus to his house.

And it's pandemonium. People are wailing and crying. Minstrels are playing mournful tunes. "She's gone... she's dead... she's passed... she has forsaken us... she was so young... she's dead... she's dead... she's dead..." "QUITE! Stop crying and get away from her bed. That child's not dead. She's asleep!" And they laughed Him to scorn.

Of course, if you are on the ground right there in the mix of the action, you can appreciate why. This is like His question "Who touched me?" in the middle of the thronging crowd. The mourners were making nearly enough noise to wake the dead. No way she could have slept through that! So Jesus does the only logical thing he can – He puts them all out of the room! And then He wakes the girl up. "Little girl," He says, "get up." And she does. She was asleep after all. Jesus proved it by waking her up.

¹⁰ Luke 8:45 New King James Version

¹¹ See also Mark 6:56 and Malachi 4:2

The Lord doesn't use language haphazardly. As odd or bizarre as His statements may seem, they are true statements. When He says that a dead person is sleeping, He is not denying the reality of the corpse. He is simply defining the state of its dormancy. And He is using a very profound analogy. But before we look at that, we need to discuss the concept of soul sleep.

A. Soul sleep and time skipping

Soul sleep is a doctrine regarding the state of the dead that has been around for much of the history of the Christian Church. In its nearly two thousand years, the greater portion of Christendom has not held this doctrine in high regard. It is even possible that the reader has never heard of it until now. But I am compelled to deal with it because there are denominations that hold to it and I personally was indoctrinated into this doctrine during a formidable part of my Christian life.

What is soul sleep? It is the belief that when a person dies physically, consciousness ceases to exist. For the person who has died, their next conscious experience is the Resurrection. Because there has been no consciousness in the grave, for the departed saint there is no knowledge or sensation of the passage of time. For the saint, the time of death is the time of the resurrection, for their soul has been asleep.

*Now, there are several problems with this doctrine, not the least of which is that of turning a beautiful Scriptural symbol on its head! "Just as in sleep there is no consciousness," they say, "so in death there is no thought." Such a statement can be proven false by simple experience. Have you ever had a dream? Would you consider that experience as having contained no thought or sensation of the passage of time? Of course not! It is precisely because we **have** consciousness in sleep that the Lord used it as a metaphor for death!*

Another problem with this doctrine (and its cousin, which I call "time skipping") is its inherent idea that the physical brain is what is actually (or at least primarily) responsible for thought. This is nothing more than a mechanistic and materialistic philosophy with regard to personal identity rearing its ugly head. In essence, it says I have no thoughts because my brain has ceased to function. The question that needs to be asked is whether the brain gives birth to thoughts or are thoughts borne (as in brought) to the brain by something higher? Is it the brain, or is it the mind? If I say that I can have no consciousness aside from having a brain, I am at least in part saying that the brain is responsible for my thoughts. And that is in part to deny the function of the spirit of man or his soul.

What do I mean by "time skipping"? This is the idea that time and eternity are two entirely different things and that never the twain shall meet. In this paradigm, eternity is completely outside of time and indeed has no time signature within it. Its proponents¹² speculate that the moment one dies, one passes into eternity. Since there is no time in eternity (eternity being outside time and higher than it), everybody gets there at once.

¹² By the way, they don't use the term "time skipping." This term is my own device for giving the idea a handle.

This position assumes that eternity is a fully comprehensive “Now” that obliterates the typically held past, present, and future of chronological order. Even if we dispense with time in that classic sense, we still see in Scripture a sequential order of events within the eternal framework that seems to militate against everything happening at once. We will look at one of these verses in particular below.

I call “time skipping” a cousin of soul sleep because on this side of the veil, it leaves the departed saint in the same condition: unaware and waiting. The experience of the saint in “time skipping” is exactly the same as that of the saint in soul sleep: they die and are immediately resurrected.

Well, so much for the philosophical arguments against soul sleep and time skipping. Let us now deal with some of the Biblical arguments.

Rev 6:9-10

9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were 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, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

The souls under the altar are dead. They were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. Here we have a clear case of disembodied souls who are not resurrected and who are clearly experiencing some form of sequential awareness for they say, “How long, O Lord?”

One does not jump into eternity upon death. One enters eternity on the day of their conception!

B. Consciousness in death

There are ample Scriptures that ascribe conscious actions to the dead. Below are simply a few of them.

John 5:25

Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when **the dead shall hear** the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

*Jesus said that the dead would hear His voice. He doesn't say, “I'll raise them up and then they'll hear me.” No, He says, “The **dead** shall hear the voice...and they...shall live.”*

Isaiah 14:9-10

9 Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations.

10 **All they shall speak** and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us?

Isaiah sees forward in a prophetic vision to the time when satan is cast down into the pit. Those that are already in hell speak to him. Their speech not only indicates intelligent thought, but emotion as well. The chief ones of the earth exhibit shock at satan's downfall.

Isaiah 14:16

They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms;

Not only do they speak; they see! Once again, emotion is evident in the thought they speak. They cannot believe that this is the one that had made the earth to tremble and the kingdoms to shake.¹³

Luke 16:24

And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and **cool my tongue**; for I am tormented in this flame.

This narrative is not referred to as a parable in the text. "There was a certain rich man," Jesus said, "and a certain beggar" as if He had particular individuals in mind. But even if it were a parable, why would Jesus represent the fate of dead people falsely? His parables are instructive for the very reason that they connect transcendent truths with ordinary daily experiences. If the experience of the departed is not as Jesus described it, do we need to wonder about the fate of seeds sown in the field? The testimony of Jesus is that Hades has flames and those who are tormented by them experience thirst. He is the Truth. I am pretty sure He knew what He was talking about!

So we have seen from an Old Testament prophet and the mouth of The Prophet that the dead hear, see, speak, have emotion, and can feel. Anyone who purports that the dead experience no intermittent conscious state prior to physical resurrection must deal with the declaration of Jesus that the dead hear, speak, and can experience comfort or misery.

C. Some sleep science (or science to put you to sleep!)

In "Basics of Sleep Behavior", the Sleep Research Society defines sleep with the following four criteria¹⁴:

¹³ I am aware of the tendency and desire of some to keep these passages poetic and interpret them solely as they apply to human personages. But the truth is that there is a devil. And verses 12-15 are about him. Those who deny his existence do so at the peril of their own souls.

¹⁴ From "Basics of Sleep Behavior" (BSB) © 1997 WebSciences International and Sleep Research Society (United States), Part A - "What Is Sleep", <http://www.sleephomepages.org/sleepsyllabus/fr-a.html>

- 1) Little movement
- 2) A stereotypic posture
- 3) A reduced response to stimulation
- 4) Reversibility

With regard to reversibility, they state “we know that we can readily awake from sleep, which distinguishes it from coma or death.”¹⁵ I find it interesting that from a scientifically observable point of view (without electronic diagnostic tools or mirrors to catch the breath with) it is only reversibility that distinguishes sleep from death! Of course, we know that death is reversible.

As I mentioned earlier, typical life experience regarding sleep shows us that the sleeping state isn't an unconscious one (if by unconscious we mean no mental activity). Following are some more statements about sleep from the Sleep Research Society (United States):

“The old notion that sleep occurs as a result of the withdrawal of activity in systems that promote wakefulness is simply not true. Sleep is not a passively occurring state, but one that is actively generated by activity in specific regions.”¹⁶

“The cortical EEG¹⁷ of REM sleep closely resembles the EEG of active wakefulness, and in some species they are virtually indistinguishable.”¹⁸

“Measures of central nervous system activation strongly suggest that the brain reaches peak activity during REM sleep...It is difficult to understand the popular stereotype of sleep as the brain turned off, which is analogous to a car sitting in a garage with the ignition turned off and the motor silent. This point of view also underlies a metaphorical mythology that the brain must ‘rest.’ It is no more conceivable that the brain needs to rest than that the liver needs to rest.”¹⁹

Not only is sleep not loss of mind and memory, it may actually aid in the laying down of long-term memory.

“Episodes that are destined for long-term memory appear to be shunted down to the hippocampus from the cortex, where they are registered as neural patterns in much the same way as they are in the cortex.

“These episodes seem to remain in limbo for some time – perhaps as long as two years – before they are finally laid down. During this time they are frequently

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶BSB, Part E - “Brain Mechanisms of Sleep and Wakefulness”, <http://www.sleephomepages.org/sleepsyllabus/fr-e.html>

¹⁷ Electroencephalogram, i.e. “brain waves.”

¹⁸ BSB, Part D - “NREM and REM Sleep”, <http://www.sleephomepages.org/sleepsyllabus/fr-d.html>

¹⁹ BSB, “Introduction”, <http://www.sleephomepages.org/sleepsyllabus/fr-intro.html>

brought together by the hippocampus and replayed. *This happens largely during sleep, and may account for the intrusion of daily events into dreams.*²⁰

There is a principle in Hermeneutics that states “first is the natural and then the spiritual.”²¹ By this it is meant that the God who created the universe uses His creation to teach us about Himself and His ways.²² Is it possible that in the sleep of death there is an analogous process of laying down long-term memories? Is it possible that while awaiting final judgment, our life will come into true perspective and truthful recollection? This is simply a conjecture, but one worthy of consideration.

3. I Go that I May Awake Him – John 11:11

John 11:11

These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.

A. The Lazarus account

i. Sickness not unto death – John 11:1-4

John 11:1-4

1 Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.

2 (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)

3 Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.

4 When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.

In light of what transpires in the next couple of days, Jesus’ statement is startling. “This sickness is not unto death,” He said. Imagine if He had told the disciples, “Two days from today, it will not rain.” And then two days later comes a gully washer. What would the disciples think?

Jesus receives the message of Lazarus’ illness and confidently declares that it is not unto death. Then He stays put for two days waiting for Lazarus to die.

ii. Lazarus is dead – John 11:12-15

John 11:12-15

12 Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well.

13 Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep.

14 Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.

²⁰ Rita Carter, *Mapping the Mind*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, California, Text copyright © Rita Carter, 1998, p. 164-165. Emphasis mine.

²¹ 1 Cor. 15:46

²² Rom. 1:20

15 And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him.

Why didn't He say, "Lazarus is dead" right at the start? I really don't believe His intention was to confuse the disciples (though He does love to communicate in a fashion that forces us to think). He said Lazarus was asleep. They can't grasp His perspective. They don't understand that He is the Resurrection and the Life. He has to tell them straight, "Lazarus is dead." But He had just told them two days before that the sickness wasn't unto death. I don't know about you, but if I had been there, I would have been scratching my head!

iii. The Resurrection and the Life – John 11:20-26

John 11:20-26

20 Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house.

21 Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

22 But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.

23 Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.

24 Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

*When He tells Martha that Lazarus is going to get up, she replies with a statement of faith regarding the resurrection of the just. But He is yearning to impart a much deeper truth. "I AM the Resurrection and the Life," He tells her, "he that believes in me **shall never die.**" Please keep in mind that He declared this to a disciple whose brother did believe in Jesus and was lying stone cold and rotting in a tomb! He is not using a figure of speech. He is declaring the truth to Martha. He is the Resurrection and His own are in His hand!²³*

John 11:43-44

43 And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

44 And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

B. He wakes the dead.

John 5:24-29

²³ John 10:27-29

24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

25 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

26 For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;

27 And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.

28 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,

29 And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

All who have ever lived and died will be resurrected by the Lord Jesus for every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

III. The Sting of Death and the Victory of Christ

1. Death Defined

Since we have seen that man is made up of spirit, soul, and body, we must look at what death means for each of these.

A. Body death

James 2:26

For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

This is as straightforward a definition of body death as one can get. A body is dead when it is without the spirit.²⁴

Matthew 27:50

Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

*The Greek word translated “yielded” in verse 50 is *aphiemi*, which can mean to let go or send away. From other passages, we shall see that Jesus literally sent His spirit out of His body as an offering to the Father.*

Mark 15:37-39

37 And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.

38 And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

39 And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.

Here in Mark, the phrase “gave up the ghost” is literally “breathed out.” He breathed His Spirit out and thus His body was dead. In a very real sense, they didn’t

²⁴ This does not include spirit travel a la 2 Cor. 12:1-4; 1 Cor. 5:3-5; or Ezek. 8:3.

kill Him. He laid His life down. He offered His body as a sacrifice. And even as He laid it down, He raised it up again.

John 2:19-22

19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

20 Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?

21 But he spake of the temple of his body.

22 When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.

He said He would raise it up. And raise it up He did! Hallelujah!

B. Soul death

Psalms 89:48

What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah.

The word “grave” in the Hebrew is sheol. We typically hear it referred to as hell or Hades. The problem with calling sheol or Hades Hell is that it conjures up all kinds of images of final and eternal torment. Hades is not the place of final and eternal torment. The lake of fire is. As a matter of fact, Hell itself is cast into the lake of fire.²⁵

When a soul is in Hades or sheol, it is dead. This is where the soul of Jesus went once He died on the cross.

Acts 2:31

He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.

“His soul was not left in hell.” This indicates that His soul was retrieved from hell. By whom?

John 10:17-18

17 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.

18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

This “life” in verse 17 is the Greek word psuche. I know this all sounds very technical, but we are talking about nothing less than the specifics of the greatest act

²⁵ Rev. 20:14

of love the race of man has ever seen. We are talking about the particulars of our redemption. I believe the subject deserves, yea requires, a detailed examination.

The Lord said that He was going to lay down His soul and take it up again. He is very clear. No one is going to take His soul. He has the power to lay it down and the power to take it back up. The word “power” is the Greek word exousia, which means “authority.” He had the authority to lay His soul down and take it back up because it was commanded of Him by the Father. There is no commandment of God that does not grant authority.²⁶

The Lord Jesus took (Greek lambano – to take hold of with the hand in a self-promoted action) His soul from Hades and resurrected His body from the grave.

James mentions another aspect of soul death that bears looking into.

James 5:19-20

19 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;

20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

Note that the sinner of verse 20 is one of the brethren of verse 19. “Brethren, if any of you do err,” he says. His comment about the one who converts the sinner is startling. “He...shall save a soul from death.” James is referring to the soul of a born again saint! It must be possible then for a saint who continues to walk in the way of sin to have his soul suffer death.

Mark 8:35-37

35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

C. Spirit death

Genesis 2:17

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Adam only lived to be 930 years old. So from God's perspective, he didn't live out the day²⁷. But Adam also died in the day he ate from his perspective as well. As we have seen from the body and the soul, death is not a cessation of existence. It is a change of state. The Adam after the forbidden fruit was not the same as the Adam before. His spirit had become darkened by sin. He had died spiritually.

As Adam's children, we were born spiritually dead.

²⁶ Even if the command is negative (i.e. “thou shalt not”), it grants the authority of self-control.

²⁷ See 2 Pet. 3:8

Ephesians 2:1

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

A dead spirit is one that is separated from God. To make our redemption complete, Jesus offered His Spirit to the Father, which also meant a separation from Him.

Matthew 27:46

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

This declaration from the cross was prophesied in the 22nd Psalm. The 31st Psalm also spoke prophetically of the crucifixion.

Ps 31:22-24

22 For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee.

23 O love the LORD, all ye his saints: for the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.

24 Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD.

The Son put His hope in the Father and the Father strengthened His heart, made alert the innermost part of His being. In other words, the Father raised the Spirit of the Son from the dead.

Revelation 1:17-18

17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

He experienced the fullness of death that He might give unto us the fullness of life!

2. Jesus, the Payment for Sin

Jesus paid the price for our sin. We more often than not think in terms of “payment for” instead of “payment to.” Some say that the payment was made to satan to purchase the souls of men back from him. Though it is true that we are redeemed from his torments, satan was not holding the debt marker. He is an offender like us, not the offended. The Lord is the One who is sinned against. The debt of sin is owed to Him. Because no man had the wherewithal to pay the price, He paid the price Himself.

A. His flesh for the world – John 6:51

John 6:51

I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

He offered up His flesh for the life of the world. He died that the world might live. But the part of Himself that He offered up to all of mankind (i.e., the world) was His flesh – His body.

Even now, it is still His body that is to be offering life to the world. The Church, the Body of Christ, is to be about the business of broadcasting the Gospel that people might hear, believe, and live.

B. His soul for the sheep, His friends – John 10:11; 15:13

John 10:11

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life (Greek – *psuche*, soul) for the sheep.

As the Good Shepherd, He laid His soul down for the sheep; those who hear His voice and follow Him.

John 15:13

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life (Greek – *psuche*, soul) for his friends.

*His flesh was given for the entire world. But He laid down His soul for His friends. This is a greater level of intimacy. His crucifixion was horrible enough. But His precious soul went to Hades **so that we might have friendship with God!***

1 Cor 16:22

If anyone does not love the Lord [does not have a friendly affection for Him and is not kindly disposed toward Him], he shall be accursed! Our Lord will come! (Maranatha!) AMP

The Greek word translated “love” in this verse is phileo, often referred as soulish love as apposed to the spiritual love of agape. When we are born again, the Holy Spirit pours agape love throughout our spirits.²⁸ This is a gift from God. But to avoid a curse (read “burnt wood, hay, and stubble”) at the Lord’s return, we need to develop a soul relationship with Him as well. This cannot be done without walking in Lordship. When we understand that He laid His soul down for us that we might be friends, why would we refrain from fellowshiping with Him?

C. His spirit to God for justification – Luke 23:46; 1 Tim. 3:16

Luke 23:46

And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

²⁸ See Rom. 5:5. “Heart” is synonymous with the spirit of man.

The Lord's cry was a quote of Psalm 31:5. In the Hebrew, the term "commit" is paqad. W. E. Vine gives the following definition for this word.

paqad "to number, visit, be concerned with, look after, make a search for, punish."

The first occurrence is in Gen 21:1 ("The Lord visited Sarah") in the special sense of "to intervene on behalf of," so as to demonstrate the divine intervention in the normal course of events to bring about or fulfill a divine intent. Often this intervention is by miraculous means.

The verb is used in an expression which is unique to Hebrew and which shows great intensity of meaning. Such an occurrence appears in Ex 3:16 ff., in which it is used twice in two different grammatical forms to portray the intensity of the action; the text reads (literally): "Looking after, I have looked after" (KJV, "I have surely visited"). The usage refers to God's intervention in His saving the children of Israel from their bondage in Egypt. The same verb in a similar expression can also be used for divine intervention for punishment: "Shall I not visit them for these things?" Jer 9:9, which means literally: "Shall I not punish them for these things?"²⁹

Not only does this word show intense observation for the purpose of miraculous intervention, it also involves divine punishment! What a fitting and precise word to use at the moment of offering up His Spirit to the Father! Not only was He giving it to be divinely punished for all the sins of the world, He also knew that the Father would miraculously intervene on His behalf and deliver Him from the death He had submitted Himself to.

The Greek term translated "commend" in Luke 23:46 is also profound. It is the word paratithemi, and it means "to put near, to set before." It is most frequently used to describe the offering of food to someone. One is reminded of the shewbread that was weekly laid out in the Temple as an offering to God.³⁰ His flesh was an offering to the world. His Spirit was a sweet smelling sacrifice to the Father.³¹

1 Timothy 3:16

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

The Lord was a perfect, sinless sacrifice; the just for the unjust. As the Righteous One, He offered up His Spirit for our justification.

Romans 4:25-5:2

25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

²⁹ from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright © 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers

³⁰ 1 Chron. 9:32

³¹ Eph. 5:2

2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Even as the Father dispatched the Spirit of the Son into the body prepared for Him in the womb of Mary and in His birth was declared the Son of God, so now in delivering His Spirit from the womb of the grave, the Father declared "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee."³² As Christ arose from out of the depths of the Abyss, He took up His soul once more and resurrected His body even as He had said He would.³³ This is the power of His resurrection. It is no trifling matter, but the exceeding greatness of the power of the Godhead!³⁴

3. Our Life Hid in Christ

Once we accept His purchase price, we are no longer our own. We belong to Him and none can take us out of His hand.

John 10:28

And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

Romans 8:38-39

38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Knowing this, we need have no fear of death.

A. The living dead?

For those who may still have difficulty with the concept of the dead living, what will you do with the living dead?

Colossians 3:1-3

1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

We in this life are dead and our life is hidden, encrypted in Christ!

B. Hope, it's not just for life anymore!

1 Corinthians 15:16-19

³² Acts 13:33

³³ John 2:19

³⁴ As in the Incarnation, the Holy Spirit played the role of the midwife. He delivered the Son to Mary and He delivered Him to and through the cross (Hebrews 9:14).

16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:
17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.
18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.
19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

*We have some amazing truths in this section of Scripture. Once we reset the Apostle's negations by the light of the resurrection of the Lord, we understand that they which are fallen asleep in Christ **are not perished!** Praise God, this is Good News! We also find out that hope has not perished either in the sleep state. Those who are asleep in Christ still have hope because they have not received the fullness of His promise yet.*

Romans 8:24-25

24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?
25 But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

If rewards and/or judgment came immediately upon physical death, what hope would there be outside of this life? And Paul says if we only have hope in this life, we are of all men most miserable.

2 Timothy 4:1, 6-8

1 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;
6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.
7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:
8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

*Paul is telling Timothy of two major events: Paul's own death (which he calls a departure), and the Lord's appearing. When does Paul expect to receive that crown? Not on the day of his departure but **that day**, the day of the Lord's appearing.*

Some have difficulty with a conscious intermittent state for, say they, what joy could the saint have waiting all that time not knowing what the final outcome of his works will be at the judgment seat of Christ? But, you see, this is precisely why those saints must wait because their works are not yet complete.

Revelation 14:13

And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

When we die, we rest from our labors. The only opportunity we have to impact the world for the kingdom of God is while we are in our bodies. Because our actions (both good and bad) were done in our body, they must be judged in the body. This is one of the reasons why there has to be a physical resurrection. But though we have rested from our labors, our labors have not rested. The impact of our actions continues to resound through history.

How many people do you think the Apostle Paul has reached for Christ by having been obedient to write down the revelation that Jesus Christ gave him? What about Matthew? John? How are they to be judged for their full reward before this phase of the history of the church is complete?

What about apostate ministers whose writings have led and continue to lead people astray? How is a just God to punish wickedness fairly before the full import of that wickedness is manifest? No, time must roll out and then roll up for the scroll to be complete and be entered into the record at our judgment.

We need not be concerned that an intermittent state puts the departed saints in some sort of duress. I believe they know more than us how truly beautiful, merciful, and just the Lord is. Seeing Him clearly without our physical eyes in an intermittent state will still be more joyful than beholding Him now through the dark glass that separates us.

C. Absent from body **is** present with the Lord

i. Lord of the living and the dead

Romans 14:7-9

7 For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

8 For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

9 For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

Christ died, rose, and revived for a specific purpose: to be Lord both of the dead and living. Remember what He told the Sadducees that asked Him about the woman who buried seven husbands?

Matt 22:32

I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

God is Sovereign and I in no way mean to imply that any aspect of His Creation is outside of His power. But the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ gave Him legal control of the dead, death, and hell. And He did this by dispossessing the devil through the crucifixion.

Heb 2:14-15

14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;
15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

As He said in Revelation 1:18, He has the keys to death and hell.

1 Thessalonians 5:9-10

9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,
10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

He died for us that whether we are alive or dead, we should live together with Him. Bless God, it is good to belong to Him!

ii. Our house in heaven

How is the integrity of consciousness of the departed saint kept? What body allows him to give expression to his thoughts and reflect on his life as it relates to Christ? None other than the body of Christ!

2 Corinthians 5:1-8

1 For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.
2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:
3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.
4 For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.
5 Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.
6 Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst 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, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

Some use this section of Scripture as proof text that the day of our death is for us the time of the resurrection. But there are a couple of major problems with that interpretation. For starters, the house spoken of in these verses is said to be “in the heavens” and “from heaven.” Unless we die in outer space, our bodies will be on the earth and will be resurrected from the earth for “dust thou

art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”³⁵ So the heavenly house I am clothed with when I die cannot be my resurrected body.

*The other major problem is the clear statement that having been unclothed by death, we are present with the Lord **absent from our bodies**. Absent from the body is absent from the body – not being placed in a resurrected body.*

*One other minor nuance bears mentioning. The individual body is referred to as a tabernacle. 2 Corinthians 5 doesn't say that after it dissolves, it will be reconstituted into a much more glorious body (you have to go to 1 Corinthians 15 for that information). It says that when the tabernacle dissolves, we have a **building of God, a house not made with hands**. In a very technical sense, while the individual's body is called a tabernacle, the Church – the Body of Christ – is called a temple and a spiritual house.*

Ephesians 2:21

In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

1 Peter 2:5

Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

We are part of His Church, His body, the temple that God built for His own habitation. This is the eternal house that awaits us should the Lord tarry and we depart to be with Him.

iii. He shall bring with Him

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

Ephesians 1:10

That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:

When He appears to gather us all together and snatch us away, He will bring with Him the saints that are asleep in Him. These are the ones in Christ that are in heaven.

Conclusion

³⁵ Gen. 3:19

We are in His hand and none are able to snatch us out (John 10:28). Nothing in heaven or hell can separate us from His love (Rom. 8:38-39). We have believed on Him and He has given us eternal life (John 3:16) and our life is hid in Him (Col. 3:3). Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift (2 Cor. 9:15)!