

Absent From the Body and Present With the Lord

• **II Corinthians 5:6 & 8** "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home **in the BODY**, we are absent from the Lord." "We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be **ABSENT from the BODY** and to be **PRESENT with the Lord.**"

The Bible teaches that a Believer in Jesus Christ goes directly to be with the Lord in heaven when he or she dies, but there are some groups that teach otherwise. There are some people who believe in something they call "soul sleep," which means they believe both the soul and body are in a kind of limbo, or "sleep" until the resurrection. For the purpose of this study, we will use the term spirit and soul almost interchangeably. There is a difference between spirit and soul, but that would be another Bible study altogether. The two are closely linked in the word of God (many times referred to as our "heart"), and I believe the soul and spirit TOGETHER goes to be with the Lord, while the body "sleeps" awaiting the resurrection.

Jesus said, and He was quoting from the Old Testament law, "By the mouth of two or three witnesses, let every word be established" (Matt. 18:16). Do we have any witnesses other than Jesus Himself in regards to this issue? I will give you six witnesses: John the Revelator, Paul the Apostle, Peter the Apostle, King David, King Solomon, and Elijah. Of course, the whole Bible is the word of God, but just for fun, let's look at this teaching from the viewpoint of all these witnesses:

1.) The Witness of Jesus – Jesus made it very clear in His story of the rich man and Lazarus the beggar, that both the righteous dead and the unrighteous dead are **fully conscious after death**, even though their bodies were buried in the grave (Luke 16:19-31). Jesus does NOT say that this is a parable, but instead says, "a certain rich man" and "a certain beggar" to indicate that these are actual people. Also, when Jesus raised Jairus' daughter from the dead, it says "**her spirit came again**, and she rose," which indicates that **her spirit had already left her body** (something has to leave first before it can return).

Then what about when Jesus said, "she is not dead, but sleeps," and "Our friend Lazarus sleeps; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep"? There are places in Scripture where death is referred to as "sleep" but it is only referring to the **physical BODY** being asleep, and that body will be "awakened" at the resurrection. Notice, in Matthew 27:52, it says the "**BODIES of the SAINTS who had fallen asleep were RAISED**" - it is not their bodies and souls. To **Jesus, who is the very "Resurrection and the Life,"** death does seem like mere sleep, but that does not give us any grounds to teach a doctrine of "soul sleep" (see John 11:11-25).

• **Luke 8:52-55** ".....but He said, 'Weep not; she is not dead, but sleeps.' And they laughed Him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. And He put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, 'Maid, arise.' And **her SPIRIT came again**, and she arose..."

• **Matthew 12:40** "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man (Jesus) be **three days and three nights** in the **HEART** of the earth."

• **Psalms 16:10** "For You will not leave **my SOUL in Sheol**, nor will You allow Your Holy One (Christ) to see corruption (decay)."

Hades or Sheol is below, in the lower parts of the earth. We see that Jesus said He would be there for three days and three nights, "in the heart of the earth." He cannot mean in His tomb, because His tomb was carved out of rock in the side of a hill, ABOVE the ground. **His body was in the tomb** for three days, but **His spirit went into Hades** to preach to the

souls/spirits there who were "in prison" (I Peter 3:19-20), and to release the souls of all the Old Testament Believers (He led "captivity" - the captive spirits), and take them up to heaven when He ascended to the Father (John 20:17). David prophesied of the Messiah, but was also speaking of himself in Psalm 16:10, that **his SOUL would not be left in Sheol**, and he also prophesied of the resurrection of Jesus when he said that God would not leave His Holy One, the Messiah, to decay in the grave.

•**Read Luke 16:19-31** (verse 22-24) "So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the ANGELS into Abraham's bosom. The rich man also **died and was buried**. And **being in TORMENTS in Hades**, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then 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.**'" (Verse 26) "And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that **those who want to pass from here to you cannot**, nor can those from there pass to us."

•**Matthew 27:51-53** "And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and **the graves were opened**, and many **BODIES of the SAINTS who had fallen asleep were RAISED**; and COMING out of the GRAVES AFTER His RESURRECTION, they went into the holy city and appeared to many."

Definition: "AFTER HIS RESURRECTION" — NO ONE could be bodily resurrected from the dead until Jesus went FIRST, because **Christ is the firstfruits** of the resurrection and **firstborn from the dead** (see Colossians 1:18, I Corinthians 15:20). **No one's soul or spirit could go directly into the presence of God BEFORE JESUS opened the way** (that is what the VEIL in the temple being TORN in TWO symbolizes). See also John 14:1-6, Hebrews 11:32-40, Hebrews 9:8-14, Hebrews 10:19-23 - Jesus had to go FIRST and PREPARE the WAY for us to come into the Father's presence.

Definition: "ABRAHAM'S BOSOM" — This denotes a place of COMFORT, as in saying Abraham's LAP, or that Abraham is HUGGING one to his chest (bosom). This name was used to describe the TEMPORARY place where **the SOULS of the RIGHTEOUS dead** would go BEFORE CHRIST. This part of Hades was also called Paradise. When Jesus said to the thief on the cross, "Truly, I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise," He was referring to Abraham's Bosom. Then, three days later, after His own resurrection, He emptied out Paradise, and brought all of those saints to heaven.

•**Ephesians 4:8-10** "Therefore He says, 'When He (Jesus) ascended on high He LED CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE, and gave gifts to men.' Now this, 'He ascended' — what does it mean but that He also **FIRST DESCENDED into the LOWER PARTS OF THE EARTH?**"

Definition: "He LED CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE" — Jesus EMPTIED OUT the part of Hades with the SOULS of the righteous dead, the saints of God, and **He LED THEM up to heaven**. He was able to do this, because **He was victorious over Satan at the cross** Colossians 2:14-15) and **He now holds the KEYS of death and Hades** (Rev. 1:17-18). Their SOULS were REUNITED with their BODIES which came out of the graves when Jesus rose from the dead. In like manner, the SOULS (and spirits) of all those who have died IN CHRIST will be reunited with their NEW bodies at the "Rapture" (I Thess. 4:13-18, I Cor. 15:50-54).

Definition: "LOWER PARTS OF THE EARTH" — The Bible is clear about the location of Hades as being in the lower parts of the earth. There is NO ONE left in the "Abraham's Bosom" part, because Jesus emptied it out. However, all the SOULS of the UNBELIEVERS, the unrighteous dead, are STILL WAITING in Hades until the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15). If a person died TODAY, rejecting Christ, their soul and spirit would go to Hades, the place of torment, to await their resurrection and the Judgment. It is not until after their bodies are resurrected that they will be judged and thrown into the Lake of Fire. Every unrighteous person

(the Bible calls them "the wicked") since Cain is still waiting there. **This IS NOT Purgatory!** The teaching of a purgatory, where one can somehow atone for one's sins (or "purge" them away), is a **MAN-MADE doctrine**, an invention of the Roman Catholic popes to enslave people to that religious system. **Purgatory is not found anywhere in the word of God.**

•**Psalm 49:15-17** "But God will redeem **my SOUL from the power of Sheol**, for He shall receive me. Do not be afraid when one becomes rich, when the glory of his house is increased; for when he dies he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not **DESCEND** after him."

•**Psalm 55:15** "Let death seize them; let them **go DOWN alive into Sheol**, for wickedness is in their dwellings and among them."

•**Psalm 63:9** "But those who seek my life, to destroy it, shall go into the **LOWER PARTS of the earth.**"

2.) The Witness of Paul and Peter – The Apostle Paul makes it very clear that when we are "**absent from the body**" we are immediately "**present with the Lord.**" Paul also says in I Thessalonians 4:13-18 that **the Lord will "bring with Him"** the dead in Christ, as their bodies are being resurrected at the Rapture. If Jesus is going to bring the departed saints **with Him from heaven**, it is obvious that their souls were not sleeping in the grave with their bodies.

•**I Thessalonians 4:14 & 16-17** "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so those who sleep in Jesus will God **BRING with Him.**" "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first (Christians who have died will be **RESURRECTED**). Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up (taken up) together with them **in the CLOUDS to meet the Lord in the air.** And thus we shall **ALWAYS** be with the Lord."

•**Philippians 1:21-23** "For me, to live is Christ, and **to die** is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard pressed from both directions, having the desire **to DEPART and be with Christ**, for that is very much better."

•**II Corinthians 5:6 & 8** "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home **in the BODY**, we are absent from the Lord." "We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be **ABSENT from the BODY** and to be **PRESENT with the Lord.**"

•**II Peter 1:13-15** "Yea, I think it meet (right), **as long as I am in this tabernacle**, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I **must PUT OFF this my TABERNACLE**, even as our Lord Jesus Christ has showed me. Moreover I will endeavor (try) that you may be able after my decease (death) to have these things always in remembrance."

Peter speaks of "putting off this my tabernacle" ("lay aside my earthly dwelling" in some translations), by which he means **his earthly, physical BODY**. This is Peter's way of referring to death, just as Paul calls it "being absent from the body." Obviously, **if we can PUT OFF the body**, the true person, the soul and spirit, is **LEAVING** the body at death. In some translations, II Peter 1:15 reads, ".....that at any time **after my departure** you may be able to call these things to mind," so again we see that death is a **DEPARTURE** from the physical body. When Paul wrote his last letter before his death, to the church in Philippi, he told them that he was ready **"to DEPART and be with Christ."** Jesus Christ is not still in the grave, so Paul is **NOT** talking about departing and going into the grave in some kind of "soul sleep"! Jesus Christ is sitting **in heaven** at the right hand of the Father, and that is where **ALL** true, born-again believers in Christ will go **IMMEDIATELY** after we depart from our earthly bodies! When we die, we will **immediately "DEPART and be with Christ**, for that is very much better" (Philippians 1:23).

3.) The Witness of David in the Old Testament – Again, David was also speaking of himself in Psalm 16:10, that **his SOUL would not be left in Sheol**, as well as prophesying of the resurrection of Jesus. Notice how David says the wicked will "go down alive into Sheol," meaning that their souls would be conscious. If Sheol or Hades just meant "the grave," they would not be going down ALIVE.

•**Psalm 49:15-17** "But God will redeem **my SOUL from the power of Sheol**, for He shall receive me. Do not be afraid when one becomes rich, when the glory of his house is increased; for when he dies he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not **DESCEND** after him."

•**Psalm 16:10** "For You will not leave **my soul in Sheol**, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption (decay)."

•**Psalm 55:15** "Let death seize them; let them **go down ALIVE into Sheol**, for wickedness is in their dwellings and among them."

4.) The Witness of Solomon in the Old Testament – The BODIES of humans and animals BOTH return to the earth. The "spirit" of the beast in this verse means BREATH or LIFE FORCE. The Bible says that BOTH animals and humans were made from the earth, but God breathed **an ETERNAL SPIRIT into man only**, and **made him in His image** (Genesis 1:24, Gen. 2:7 & 19). Solomon says that the spirit of man will return to God who made him, and will go to his eternal home.

•**Ecclesiastes 3:18-21** "All go to one place: **all are from the dust**, and **all return to dust**. Who knows the spirit of the sons of men, which goes upward, and the SPIRIT of the BEAST, which goes down to the EARTH?"

•**Ecclesiastes 12:5b & 7** "....For man **goes to his eternal home**, and the mourners go about the streets." "Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and **the spirit will return to God** who gave it."

5.) The Witness of John the Revelator – Notice, in describing the resurrection of the unsaved, it says "**death AND Hades** were cast into the lake of fire," which shows that these are two separate things. You see, the sea and the graves in the earth will give up **the dead BODIES in them**, but Hades must give up their SOULS!! As for the saved, we see a picture of the SOULS of the Tribulation martyrs under the altar in heaven. Their souls are fully conscious, as they cry out to God for His judgment upon the earth. Their bodies will be resurrected at the end of the Great Tribulation (Rev. 20:4-6).

•**Revelation 20:11-15** "And **I saw the DEAD, small and great**, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the DEAD were JUDGED according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead [*bodies*] who were in it, and **Death (the grave) and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them**. And they were judged, each one according to his works. **Thendead and Hades** were cast into the Lake of Fire. This is the second death. And anyone who was NOT found written in the BOOK of LIFE was cast (thrown) into the Lake of Fire."

•**Matthew 10:28** "And do not fear those who kill the body, but are not able to kill the SOUL; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy **both soul and body in hell**."

•**Revelation 6:9** "....I saw under the altar **the SOULS** of them that were slain for the word of God.....and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, do You not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?'"

Hades is the place of the dead, located in the center of the earth. It is called **Hades** (Greek) in the New Testament, and **Sheol** (Hebrew) in the Old Testament. Hades

was divided into two parts: (1) a place of **torment for the unbelievers**; and (2) a place called "Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16) which was a place of **comfort for Believers**. Jesus went into Hades (for the three days between His death and His resurrection, Matthew 12:40) and took out all the spirits (souls) of those who had **died believing God and trusting in Him**, and took them up to heaven (Ephesians 4:8-10). The only ones left in Hades NOW are the unbelievers, those who died rejecting Christ, and for them it is a place of torment. Their spirits are waiting for the resurrection and Judgment Day, when they will be reunited with their resurrected bodies, and after the judgment, thrown into the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:11-15). Before Jesus' death and resurrection, Believers did not go directly into the presence of God when they died. Now, **the spirits and souls** of ALL believers in Christ go directly and immediately to heaven (II Corinthians 5:6-8), and there they wait for the resurrection of their BODIES.

6.) The Witness of Elijah in the Old Testament – Elijah cried out to God to "let the child's soul come into him again." This is similar to Jesus raising Jairus' daughter, except that **Elijah had to pray for God to send the soul back**, whereas Jesus, as God in the flesh, had authority to command the child back to life Himself.

• **I Kings 17:17-23** "And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the Lord, 'O Lord my God, I pray Thee, **let this child's SOUL come into him again.**' And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah; and **the SOUL of the child came into him again**, and he revived."

Some people argue that spirit only means "breath" and that soul only means "life force." Depending on the context, there are a few places where that is true, especially where referring to animals. However, we see from these verses that every human being is a three-part being: spirit, soul, and body. For the Believer in Jesus Christ, the WHOLE person, spirit and soul and body, will be preserved by God, and brought to heaven. It is with our soul and spirit that we worship God, seek a close relationship with God, and know and understand the things of God. God dwells in all believers in Jesus Christ by His Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit communicates with all true believers through their own spirits.

• **I Thessalonians 5:23** "And the very God of peace **sanctify you wholly**; and may **your WHOLE spirit, and soul and body** be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

• **Zechariah 12:1** "...the Lord, who stretches forth the heavens, and lays the foundation of the earth, and **forms the spirit of man within him.**"

• **Luke 1:46-47** "And Mary said, '**My soul magnifies the Lord**, and **my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.**'"

• **Isaiah 26:9** "**With my soul** have I desired Thee in the night; yea, **with my spirit within me** will I seek Thee early."

• **I Cor. 2:11** "For what man knows the things of a man, except **the spirit of man which is in him**? Even so the things of God no man knows, except the Spirit of God."

• **I Corinthians 6:20** "For you were bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and **in your spirit**, which are God's."

• **John 4:23-24** "But the hour is coming, and now is, when **the true worshipers will WORSHIP the Father in spirit** and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. **God is Spirit**, and those who worship Him must **worship in SPIRIT** and TRUTH."

• **Philippians 3:3** "For we are the circumcision (true worshipers), **who worship God in the spirit**, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

• **Psalms 77:2-3 & 6** "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord.....**my SOUL refused to be comforted**. I remembered God, and was troubled; I complained, and **my SPIRIT was overwhelmed.**" "I call to remembrance my song in the night; I commune with my own heart, and **my SPIRIT made diligent search.**"

•**Romans 8:16** "The Spirit Himself **bears witness with our SPIRIT** that we are the children of God." •**John 3:6** "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is **born of the Spirit is spirit.**"