

Fact Sheet for “What’s in Our Future?” 2 Corinthians 5:1-10

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This passage is prophecy! Consider the end of the book of Revelation when John wrote of the great white throne judgment. That is prophecy. This passage fits right in. The intent of prophecy is to change us. It is not to have a bit of Bible knowledge that we highly prize... in a sense only to place it on a shelf in a nice glass box to admire. God gave us prophecy to encourage us to make decisions in life that lead us to spiritual maturity... to confidence, to trust, to dedication, to a sure and certain hope of eternal life. This passage was meant by God to change us!

It actually begins with the last couple of verses that we read last week (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). Now Paul continues.

ESV ¹ ¶ For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Tent = temporary / earthly life, Building = permanent / eternal life

Where we go from there depends on what we do with Jesus now. These words were written to Christians. Those who are not Christians have a different fate (Revelation 20:11-15).

“**we have a building from God**” – With this statement Paul expresses absolute certainty that after we die we will have an immortal, eternal body.

I have phrased this very carefully. Read it again. Will this happen immediately upon death? Answering that question is *not* Paul’s intent here. His intent is to contrast our temporary earthly body with our immortal eternal body.

But people see this passage and also 1 Thessalonians 4:16. This often brings up several questions.

Do our spirits go to sleep when we die, only to be awakened at the rapture when we receive our resurrected bodies?

Are we conscious after we die?

Do we go immediately to be with the Lord when we die?

Do we receive our immortal body as soon as we die?

Paul here does not set a time frame for receiving our immortal body. He just expresses absolute certainty that we will.

² For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, ³ if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. ⁴ For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened-- not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

And then a great statement...

⁵ He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

The word “guarantee” means “*first installment, deposit, down payment, pledge*”. We have a term that we understand... “*earnest money*”. It is used by Paul on two other occasions (2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Ephesians 1:13-14). Christians have the indwelling Holy Spirit. That gift is God’s promise of our full inheritance of eternal life.

⁶ ¶ So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, ⁷ for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸ Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

Let me go back to two questions I mentioned earlier...

Do we go immediately to be with the Lord when we die?

The answer is a resounding "YES!"

Do we receive our immortal body as soon as we die?

Maybe not.

There are several passages that are good to mention here.

Saul calling up Samuel (1 Samuel 28)

A statement in Daniel (12:1-2)

The Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-9; Mark 9:2-10; Luke 9:28-36)

The rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)

The Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 20:11-15)

Consider too Jesus. The moment He died on the cross he was separated from His mortal body. He didn't get His immortal body until He rose from the dead. What will happen to us is similar, just a longer time frame.

This is certain... absent from the body, present with the Lord. Now Paul drives an application home.

⁹ So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

Since our eternity is with Christ we need to live now, to make everyday decisions now with that eternity in mind. If we do this there is reward awaiting us. If we don't there are consequences.

¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

And this is not the only place this thought is written (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Romans 14:10-12).

The trouble is that too many Christians choose to do what they want now, not what God wants.

It is true that we will be saved regardless (Romans 8:1).

But eternity will not be level for all of us (1 Corinthians 3:10-15).

There is another application we can draw from Paul's words. When the day comes when each Christian stands before the judgment seat of Christ Who will be on the other side of that bench? Christ! What will we be judged harshly for? Sinful choices! What will we be rewarded for? Righteous choices! Will we be judged then *simply* because someone here has had a problem with our choices? No! What is on the path of wisdom? Listening to others, then making righteous and wise choices.

If you are pleasing to Christ in your decisions it doesn't matter how angry, disappointed, or irritated others may get with you. Just be certain in this though that your attitudes, decisions, and actions are pleasing to Christ. Keep your eternal future always in mind. This is prophecy. Let it change you.