

## 2 Cor. 5:1 – Earthly Tent

Death has long been the enemy of man, ever since that day in the Garden when Adam plunged the human race into the misery of sin and death. From that moment onward, until the Crucifixion of the Second Adam, death reigned. But now, from the time of Jesus Christ, righteousness, grace, and life now reign in those who believe in Jesus (Rom. 5:12-24). However, the all-pervasive problem is that even though Jesus Christ has redeemed His people from the clutches of death, and has brought eternal life to us, we still do experience physical death. So the question is, how has Jesus saved us from death, if in fact our bodies still die?

One of the answers that I spoke of last week on Easter, is that our souls no longer go to Hades when we die. Our souls now go to be directly with the Lord in Heaven. And the NT sometimes uses language which indicates that the event of our death is our resurrection. For example, in Rev. 20:4 it says:

*<sup>4</sup>Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. <sup>5</sup>The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection.”*

So the first resurrection is when the souls of those who had been killed for the testimony of Jesus and the word of God come to life

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and reign with Christ for a thousand years. The coming to life is not bodily resurrection. It is meant to serve as a contrasting image, which is meant to teach that Christians cannot be killed. Even in their death they come to life and reign. And this is typical paradoxical language that John uses throughout Revelation.

For example, “John heard that Judah’s Lion had “conquered” and was worthy to open God’s scroll ([Rev. 5:5](#)). But he saw a Lamb standing, as though slain; and because of its bloody death the Lamb was worthy to open the scroll ([Rev. 5:9](#)). Lamb’s slaughter is the Lion’s victory. The weakness of Christ’s cross is God’s power ([1 Cor. 1:18–25](#)). Again, in [Revelation 11:7](#) and 13:7 the beast, backed by Satan, conquers and kills God’s saints. On the surface, the martyrs’ bloody deaths look like utter defeat. Between those two statements, however, John sees the real situation: believers whom Satan once accused “have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death” ([Rev. 12:11](#)). Martyrs who laid down their lives, trusting in Jesus’ blood and righteousness, stand victorious over Satan himself.”

“Since the Lamb triumphed by being slain and the secret to his followers’ victory is their faithfulness unto death, Revelation’s paradoxical logic leads to the surprising conclusion that the first resurrection was, in fact, the martyrs’ violent death at the hands of their persecutors. That death ushered them into the presence of God, where they now worship as priests and reign as kings

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([Rev. 20:6](#); see [Rev. 7:9-12](#)). Although the martyrs still await God's avenging justice ([Rev. 6:10](#)) and "the redemption of our bodies" ([Rom. 8:23](#)), their departure to be with Christ is, for them, "far better" ([Phil. 1:23](#)), for to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, which is a sweet foretaste of the second resurrection at Christ's return, when "death is swallowed up in victory" ([1 Cor. 15:54](#)),<sup>1</sup> and we are given new bodies forever, which are like Jesus' resurrection body. But that doesn't happen until the very end.

But for the believer in Jesus, who dies in faith in Christ, their future bodily resurrection is such a certainty, that their death is therefore likened as resurrection, even though it is not the resurrection of the body, per se. But it is still a coming to life, it is still a heavenly dwelling, it is still a resurrection. And that is an important distinction to make. Death is a resurrection for the believer, but it is not the resurrection of the body. Death is the first resurrection. The second resurrection is the resurrection of the body.

The Apostle Paul had many close encounters with death. He says in 2 Cor. 11 that he was imprisoned, beaten countless times, and often brought near death. Five times he received from the Jews 40 lashes, minus 1. Three times he was beaten with rods. Once he was stoned. Three times he was shipwrecked, and he even spent a night and day at drift at sea, he was on frequent

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<sup>1</sup> Dennis Johnson, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/first-and-second-resurrection>

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journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from his own people, danger from gentiles, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers, in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And apart from all that, there was the daily pressure on him from his anxiety for all the Churches.

And what did Paul expect? For the Lord told Annanias before he laid hands on Paul and gave him back his sight, "For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." (Acts 9:16). Paul later understood after being stoned and left to die, that it was through much tribulation that we must enter the kingdom of God.

Now, Paul says in 2 Corinthians that these afflictions that he and the other apostles experienced are for the comfort of God's people who are in any affliction. The apostle's shared in Christ's sufferings, so that they could share abundantly in comfort too.

*"If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings we suffer."*

God brought the Apostle Paul near death more times than the Bible records for us, so that we might learn from him how to patiently endure the suffering, and to not rely on our own

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strength in the midst of these afflictions, but instead to rely upon God who raises the dead. He says in chapter 1,

*<sup>8</sup>For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. <sup>9</sup>Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. <sup>10</sup>He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.*

Ultimately Paul's comfort in his afflictions and his comfort in the face of death is his belief in the God who raises the dead, and who would therefore deliver him from death. How? By raising his soul to life in Christ's presence when he dies, but also at the very end when his body will be resurrected.

Now all theology is pastoral theology, which means, it is meant to comfort us and shepherd us in our lives toward our Heavenly destination. So I don't want you to think that all this talk about different resurrections is technical theological jargon. The Bible never give truth in order to satisfy the intellectual curiosities of people who just like to think deep thoughts.

What is my point? There is a reason why Paul writes about his sufferings. Ok? As he said, so that we, who are in the midst of any affliction might be comforted. So, although we might not suffer in the same way as Paul did, the end result of all of Paul's

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sufferings is indeed the same end as our sufferings. It resulted in his death, and it will result in our death as well.

The Truth that comforted Paul in the face of death, is what he labored to make known to God's people everywhere. The hope which Paul wanted God's people to know so we also can be comforted when we are in the midst of any affliction, and especially when death is upon you, is this truth here - that God will safely bring you into His Heavenly Kingdom, and He will deliver you from death. By raising you from the dead!

Take that to heart, People of God! Consider it! Meditate upon this profound truth. God is going to rescue you from death. How? By raising you from the dead! God is not going to rescue you from death by not allowing you to die. No. He is going to rescue you from death and bring you safely into His Heavenly Kingdom through death, and then by raising you from the dead. Death is your victory. Death is your resurrection. Death is your life.

Now in this passage in 2 Cor. 5, Paul gives a few reasons for why he believes that God will rescue Him from death by raising him from the dead. And the reasons that he gives center around the nature of Jesus' resurrection body.

Notice what he says in 2 Cor. 5:1. *For we know that if our earthly tent is destroyed we have a building from God.*

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He says "We know" that if we die we have another body. How does he know this?

Reason #1 - Because of the Old Testament Tent illustrations

Reason #2 - Because Jesus was raised from the dead

Reason #3 - Because we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling

Reason #4 - Because the Spirit has been given to us as a guarantee

Today we are going to briefly discuss the first reason Paul knows that we have a building from God, a resurrection body waiting for us when we die, because of the Old Covenant Tent illustrations.

He begins the argument by saying *"For we know that if our earthly tent is destroyed, we have a building from God..."*

How does He know this? Paul seems to get this knowledge from his meditations on the Old Testament, and it is found in his understanding that this body is comparable to the tabernacle. He says, *"For we now that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God."* The earthly house of our tent" - literally, is a metaphor which seems to be a reference to a number of Old Testament allusions.

**ABRAHAM**

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One of the references I think it refers to is the tents of Abraham (Heb. 11:10):

Heb. 11 says this, *"By faith Abraham went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God." ...*"These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared for them a city."

What that means is, Abraham was given a promise that he and his descendants would dwell in the promised land. So in faith he left his home in Ur of the Chaldees, only to find the land plagued with famine. Therefore, Abraham went down to Egypt, and in anticipation of Israel's Exodus, the Lord brought plagues upon Pharaoh's house, and Pharaoh then sent Abraham away with his wife out of Egypt, like Moses with Israel. But when he arrives back in the land he still never settles, but spends the rest of his days sojourning in his own land, dwelling in a tent until his days ended.



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This teaches us, People of God, that we too, like Abraham, must consider God's promise to be worthy of our suffering and patience. Like Abraham, we too must endure long hard times of suffering, while we wait for the promise to come to pass. We will eventually and finally enter into our eternal promised land and no longer have to dwell in the tent of this body, for we will put on our Resurrection building, in the eternal and heavenly city of God, after we die.

But remember Saints, like Abraham, the man of faith, you can only receive it by patience and perseverance, and looking beyond the sufferings of this world and find your hope and joy in the eternal and heavenly world to come.

### **TABERNACLE**

Another Tent image that Paul uses when he describes our earthly body as a tent is the Tabernacle in the Wilderness. Like Abraham's tents, and like our physical body, it too was a temporary dwelling place for God until the more permanent building of the Temple replaced it. It is interesting to notice this comparison then, of the transition from the Tabernacle to the Temple. The tabernacle is a type of our physical earthly body, and the Temple is a type of our resurrected and glorified Heavenly Body.

Consider further how this relates to Jesus' own body. John 1:14 says that "The Word become flesh and tabernacled amongst

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us, or pitched his tent amongst us." If the body of Jesus at the Incarnation is likened to the tent in the wilderness, the tabernacle, then His resurrection body, the house not made with hands, is the Heavenly Temple. And if that is true of Jesus, then it is also true of us, since all that is true of the head is true of the body as well.

And so, our earthly tent, this body in which we dwell now, will be taken down when we die for a more permanent residence in the Heavenly Temple of our resurrection body, because we are united to Christ who is the True Temple of God.

But again, notice how it was that Jesus made the transition from earthly tabernacle to heavenly Temple. He had to die. It is only through death that God will deliver us from death, and raise us from the dead bodily, just as He raised Jesus, and gave Him a new body. Christ overthrew in His death, the one who had the power of the fear of death. Now, all the sons and daughter of God no longer have to fear dying, for we understand it to be only a mere shadow. There is resurrection and life and glorification on the other side.

## **BOOTHS**

Consider a third image. During the Feast of Tabernacles, the Israelites were to camp out in leafy booths made from arboreal and earthly materials (Lev. 23:39-43). This feast lasted 8 days, and

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obviously the tents which they built weren't meant to be permanently inhabited.

I believe Paul is using this analogy to describe our human bodies as transient and frail and constructed in such a manner as to be dismantled quickly. Like the booth at the end of the week, this earthly tent, our body, will also be dissolved and destroyed at the end of our lives here on earth.

But no worries, the worshipers did not mourn at the end of the feast when they took down their leafy booths, they celebrated and then went home to their more permanent home. The Feast of Booths is a micro image of our earthly lives and the hope of the resurrection of the body that we have after we die.

### **JESUS PREPARES A PLACE**

And finally, Jesus Himself said, that if he goes to prepare a place for us, then he will come again to take us to himself, that where he is, we would also be. And then he said, that we know the way to the place that he is preparing. Jesus said that he is the way. But what that means is that the way through which we must enter into the place that he has prepared for us, is through the same way he entered into his place, and that is through death.

However, for the believer in Jesus, death is not death, death is life. Death is resurrection. “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me shall never die, yet shall he live, and

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everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

And that is what it all finally comes down to, People of God. Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life, and that by believing in Him you will never die? Do you believe He is the First and the Last, the Alpha, and the Omega – the living one. He died, and behold, he is alive forevermore, and he has the keys to Death and Hades? Do you believe this?

Now, what all of these tents teach us is that the life of this body, is life in a tent, designed to be dismantled and taken down quickly and with relative ease. Life in this tent is fragile, and life in it can be taken in a moment. We are mere creatures whose breath is in our nostrils. But God has given us these pictures of these various Old Covenant Tents to teach us that when we are in the midst of any affliction, that when the strife is fierce and the warfare long, the promise of eternal life is what sustains us, and enables us to die well.

Therefore we do not lose hope, for we have a promise from God, who is faithful and who cannot lie, that when we put off this tent of our body, we have a more durable and eternally lasting building, a new body from our God, waiting for us in heaven where Christ is. Therefore, put your trust in God who raises the dead, and set your hope on him, for he is the one who alone can and will rescue you from death. Amen.