

An Attempt To Listen To God

Prophecy  
The Intermediate State

By

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The “intermediate” state is one of the great “unknowns” of the scriptures. Normally when messages are given concerning prophecy, the coming of the Lord, the Judgment Seat, the Tribulation, and the millennium are all spoken about. However, when was the last time a message was given on the place and state of the believer after death? It is in this light I speak of it as one of the great “unknowns”. It is not that there is nothing in the scriptures about it, but somehow it just gets lost in the “biggies”. One thing I do know, in February I was sixty-nine years of age, and with each passing day (if the Lord does not come soon) death is coming closer. I want to know as much as I can about where I am going and what it is like.

In case of misunderstanding, when I speak of the intermediate state I am speaking of the condition and place a believer enters upon death and before resurrection. For many thousands, perhaps millions, they have been already experiencing what it is like to be in the presence of the Lord, and while many of us gather on Sunday morning and look on the emblems of His person, they look on Him.

Whenever one hears of the death of a person, saved or unsaved, the pondering often turns to: “What is it like on the other side?”. We know that for the unsaved they are in hell and the saved are with the Lord in Heaven, but for the saint, what is it like? What are they doing? If I were told that I was going to Tahiti or the Solomon Islands next week, I would be asking and looking for information on: “What is it like?”, “What shall I bring?”. Excitement would make my sleep almost an impossibility. Why are we not like that with the intermediate state? Perhaps there is the possibility that it is to us a “great unknown”, or perhaps we are so engrossed in the earth we are not really interested, or other reasons. I think it must be wonderful to live in a place of unclouded spiritual light; to be led by the Lord into pathways of spiritual delights; to marvel at the wonders of His mercy, grace and love; to behold the glory of His power and be with the redeemed of the Lord. Sadly, for others, the fear of dying overrides the wonder of where they are going.

There are several scriptures which tell something of what it is like, but they are greatly restricted to human terminology and earthly experiences. I could never fully describe the glory of a tropical sunset to a blind individual nor the richness of a Beethoven concerto to a deaf person. How much less could Paul, who was caught up to paradise and informed his readers that he “heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for man to utter” (2 Cor. 12:4). Some heavenly words can be communicated (Ex. 34:6) but this communication was of such a nature they were not fitted for the ordinary believer while here on earth. By the restrictions of human language Paul could not attempt to tell them. It seems to me that he had the same background in mind when he wrote: “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered in to the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him” (1 Cor. 2:9). Yet, in the next verse we are informed that: “God hath revealed them unto us” (1 Cor. 2:10). That is we can know them, but the full appreciation of them is beyond our comprehension.

The saints are in an unclothed state ( 2 Cor. 5:1-4), that is, they are spirits in a spirit world, but for their salvation to be complete they must have bodies. This does not mean that those who are waiting their bodies are floating around in heaven likeness to the white vapors. Angels are spirits (Heb. 1:7), they are not vapors, but they have a body suited to their environment.

To exhort our hearts toward godliness the scriptures do give us some insights into that “land of fadeless day”. We are told that at the moment of death the believer is:

- a) “Absent from the body and present with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8). The word is “present” which means “to be at home”.
  - i) It means to be amongst ones own people. (When in a foreign land and one hears an accent from their homeland, there is an immediate connection.)
  - ii) Here the Lord cannot always be at home with me. I'm out of alignment with his character, but there the saints are morally perfect, at home with the Lord.
- b) “With Christ, which is far better.” (Phil. 1:23)
  - i) It is far better for they will never again know grief.
  - ii) It is far better for they never again will be grieved by sin.
  - iii) It is far better for they will never again know the conflict of sin within.

- c) It is a place of rest from their labors (Rev. 14:13). In Genesis 2:2 we read God rested; when the penalty for sin was borne the Lord “bowed His head” (Jn. 19:30) and the word bowed indicates: “He rested His head”. In the mercy of God we who are saved have entered into His rest (Heb. 4:3) and there remains yet an eternal rest (Rev. 14:13).
- d) In Paradise (2 Cor. 12:4). The word means royal parks or pleasure grounds. Visualise Eden with its colour, freshness, charity, and fragrance. Do you think that heaven will be less beautiful?
- e) In Glory (Heb. 2:10). “For it became Him, for whom are all things . . . in bringing many sons unto glory.”
- f) In Heaven (Heb. 9:24). “Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands . . . but into heaven itself.”
- g) Within the veil (Heb. 6:19-20). “Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul . . . and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus.” In that sphere there are pleasures forever more (Psa. 16:11). Holiness permeates the place.
- h) In a realm where God rules supreme with perfect administration. (Rev. 4:2). In that world all is on complete conformity to His will.
- i) In a place of endless life in its fulness. “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (Jn. 10:10); “Having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come (1 Tim. 4:8).
- j) In a place of perfect love. “God is love” and His perfections permeate Heaven. (1 Jn. 4:8, 16)
- k) In a place of unfettered freedom of worship. (Rev. 4:8, 10-11; 5:9-14; 7:10-12; 19:1-6)
- l) In a place of seeing the face of the Lord. “And they shall see His face”. (Rev. 22:4)
- m) In a place of divine manifestation of the glory of the Lord. (Jn. 17:24)
- n) In a place where they will never thirst again, no more tears, nor depriving of the needs of earth. (Rev. 7:16-17)
- o) Where they shall see God. (Matt. 5:8)
- p) Where they shall know as they are known. (1 Cor. 13:12)

Since the millennium and eternal state is a place of beauty (Rev. 21:1-8), service (Rev. 22:3); fellowship with God (2 Tim. 4:8); worship (Rev. 19:1-3), how equalled (at least) shall the intermediate state be?

**Oh what shall it be to be there?**

### [Can they see what's happening down here?](#)

There are two differing avenues of thought on this question. There are those who say that those in heaven have no conscious knowledge of what is happening here, being so much taken up with the glories of the Lord. The opposing view is that they are watching us. It is my understanding that both are in error for both are extremes. I am contented that both those in heaven and hell have a knowledge about things on earth, a knowledge gained from their duration on earth. The rich man in hell knew he had five brothers who were not saved, thus he knew their spiritual condition and knew they were still on earth (Lk. 16:27). Samuel knew the past behavior of Saul, his disobedience to God, his treatment of Samuel, and that which would befall him (1 Sam. 23:7-15). There is joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner that repenteth (Lk. 15:10). They are aware of that which has happened

on earth by the resulting praise in Heaven (Rev. 15:17); referring to the events of (ch. 15:2-4 and 16; 18:20; 19:1-5). Moses and Elijah were aware of that which was going to happen on earth (Lk. 9:31). They are aware of the sufferings of their fellow saints on earth (Rev. 6:9-11), and they pray (Rev. 6:10).

However, despite the hymns which inform us that they are “Looking this way” or waiting for us at the golden gates, nothing could be further from the truth. Can one honestly think that despite the bliss of Heaven they are watching their own funeral and the sorrow of their loved ones? There is a knowledge of things past on earth, relationships still on earth, but the relationship is now spiritual and not physical.

### How long will it take to get to the fathers house?

It is wonderful that the Holy Spirit causes Paul to write: “Absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8). I am aware there are those who teach that “to be present with the Lord” means not immediately but at some point in the future. Such an interpretation is foolish because if the whole verse is read, the words “to be” are used twice. Note: “we are confident . . . to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord”. It is clearly a change of condition which happens instantly. Furthermore, verse six states the present tense and the wording is: “Whilst we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord”, then in verse seven it is future tense. Again, when Paul writes to the Philippians he says: “I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better” (Phil. 1:23). He does not say “to depart and after a time to be with Christ”. It was something he expected to happen immediately upon death. Finally, when the Lord ascended to heaven how long did it take him to get there? Let the scriptures speak. The angel said: “Ye men of Galilee . . . this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven” (Acts 1:11). Note the words: “Into heaven”. He was already there.

### Soul Sleep And The Intermediate State

There is an erroneous doctrine which teaches that when a person dies, saved or unsaved, they are asleep and are unconscious of this or any other sphere. It is called “soul sleep”. This is an evil doctrine which is based on taking verses out of context. When speaking to Moses God said he was “the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob”, that is, God was still their God and they were living (Matt. 22:32). God could not be his God to an unconscious being. Clearly, the rich man and Lazarus were both conscious (Lk. 16:23-25), as was Moses (Matt. 17:3), Samuel (1 Sam. 28:15), and the souls under the altar (Rev. 6:10-11).

There is a land of pure delight,  
Where saints immortal reign,  
Infinite day excludes the night,  
And pleasures banish pain.

There everlasting bliss abides,  
Beyond those glimmering stars  
Death, like a narrow sea, divides  
This heav'nly land from ours.

O could we make our doubts remove,  
Those gloomy thoughts that rise,  
And see the Canaan that we love  
With unbeclouded eyes!

Could we but climb where Moses stood,  
And view the landscape o'er,  
Not Jordan's stream, nor death's cold flood,  
Should fright us from the shore.

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.  
John 16:13**

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