

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

Are You Planning to Go to Heaven?

By Bob Dodson

Let us examine what the apostle Paul's wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:1-11.

- Verse 1: *“For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”*

WE KNOW FOR SURE - We must not doubt or waiver from our belief in God or our conviction that heaven is a real place. James 1:5-8 teaches that as we pray to God in heaven, we must have true faith in God and in his love and power.

- Verse 2: *“For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven”*

ERNEST DESIRE AND GROANING - Because we have faith that heaven is such a pleasant and desirable place, we seriously, and sincerely, live each day of our lives carefully and faithfully as though it is our last day here on earth. This lesson is taught clearly in God's word. Please read James 4:13-17, and follow the advice given in Matthew 6:33.

- Verse 3: *“if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked.”*

FULLY CLOTHED/NOT NAKED - In 2 Peter 3:10-15, we read a description of the daily clothing worn by those who are in Christ. These are garments of holy conduct and godliness, without spot and blameless. I MUST put off the old man, (Eph. 4:22-24), and put on the new man and the garments of righteousness.

- Verse 4: *“For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.”*

MORTALITY SWALLOWED BY IMMORTALITY - Through the glorious and powerful Gospel of Christ (2 Tim. 1:10), we die to sin and live for GOD. If we are faithful to death (Rev. 2:10), our obedience will culminate in VICTORY (1 Cor. 15:50-57). This energizes us to be steadfast, always abounding in the Lord's work. (v. 58)

- Verse 5: *“Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.”*

INDWELLING SPIRIT IS OUR GUARANTEE - In Romans 8:9, Paul wrote that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ do not belong to Him. The Spirit dwells in us when we allow God's word (given by the Holy Spirit) to abide in us richly. Notice Colossians 3:16-17 and John 15:5-7. This is the down payment on eternal life (Eph. 1:13-14).

- Verses 6-7: *“Therefore we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight.”*

CONFIDENTLY WALK IN FAITH - When we walk by human insight and worldly wisdom, we walk in sin (James 3:13-18); but when we walk by following divine wisdom, we make good decisions and continue to obey God daily. Do you live your life according to carnal thinking or heaven's legislation?

- Verses 8-9: *“We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. Therefore, we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.”*

PLEASING THE LORD - One's aim and purpose, every day that he/she lives, should be to please God. As did Paul (Phil. 1:20-22), I should want to magnify Christ, whether I am in my earthly or heavenly body (Phil. 3:20-21). Those who live for the Lord will gain by dying.

- Verses 10-11: ***“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well-known to God, and I also trust are well-known in your consciences.”***

FUTURE JUDGMENT LOOMS - Everyone will be there, and no one will be too busy to attend. Every person who ever lived in righteousness will be judged by Christ, according to God's word and the person's deeds, whether good or evil (Eccl. 12:13-14). Those who were obedient and faithful will inherit the blessings of eternal life; but the wicked will receive punishment so horrible it is beyond our comprehension (Rev. 21:8). Dear reader, are you prepared for Judgment Day? ■

“The Churches of Christ Salute You”

By Joe R. Price

I came across a website dedicated to “Answering the Church of Christ.” It said,

“Often on our local TV station, the cofC preachers will talk about the churches of Christ in Romans 16:16...From this kind of literal citation of Scripture, without regards to the context, they have developed a theology about the name of the church, which just happened to be the “Church of Christ” that came out of the Stone/Campbell movement.

“They often reasoned like this: Where in the Bible do you read of a Baptist Church or a Methodist Church or a Presbyterian Church? One can read about the Church of Christ Church in Romans 16:16, but one cannot read about the others” (“Romans 16:16,” Answering the Church of Christ).

Romans 16:16 does not assign a denominational name to the Lord's church. It is a statement of possession, referring to churches that belong to Christ. These churches are local congregations, not denominations. (A basic knowledge of the New Testament and church history confirms this. For example, Romans 16:4 mentions ***“all the churches of the Gentiles,”*** not as a denominational name of churches, but as a description of their constitution, namely, all the congregations composed of Gentiles. The ***“churches of Judea”*** in Galatians 1:22 are the congregations located in Judea, not a collection of different denominations. It is entirely proper to ask the question, “Where in the Bible do you read of a Presbyterian Church, Baptist Church, Methodist Church, etc.?” They are not there.

The question remains whether today's churches of Christ are like those we read of in the New Testament. Sadly, many are not. Many have abandoned the ***“pattern of sound words”*** revealed in the New Testament and accepted the doctrines of men (2 Tim. 1:13; 4:3-4). Many have corrupted the work of the local church by adding the social gospel to the old Jerusalem gospel (1 Cor. 11:22, 34; Acts 2:42). Many have corrupted the independence of congregations by becoming “sponsoring churches” that mimic denominationalism in their organization and control of men and money. Some have perverted the worship of the New Testament by adding instrumental music (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16-17). A church may identify itself as a church of Christ but that does not mean it actually belongs to Christ.

Furthermore, the church of Christ did not “come out of the Stone/Campbell movement.” These men and many others left denominations and chose the Bible as their final word of authority, including how to describe congregations (churches) of Christians. Since Pentecost, the church of Christ has been composed of Christians, not denominations and not churches (Acts 2:47). A local church is a church that belongs to Christ (a church of Christ). More than one are ***“churches of Christ”*** (Rom. 16:16). That's not a “developed theology,” it's Bible teaching.

We urge people to give up their false concept that Christ's church is composed of denominations. We urge them to obey the gospel of Christ to be saved from their sins. When they do, the Lord will add them to His church, the church of Christ (Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:47; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:23). ■

Service Times — Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM — Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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