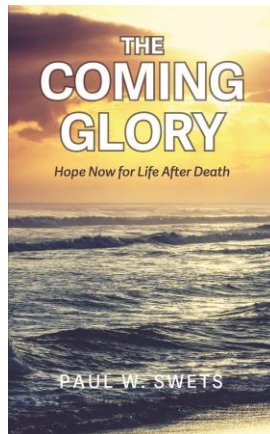


## **Contents and Sample Chapter**

### **The Coming Glory: Hope Now for Life After Death**

**By Paul W. Swets**



## **CONTENTS**

DEDICATION

READER COMMENTS

A NOTE TO THE READER

1. HOW CAN I PREPARE FOR MY DEPARTURE?
2. WHAT HAPPENS RIGHT AFTER DEATH?
3. HOW CAN I GET READY FOR THE RETURN OF CHRIST?
4. WHAT WILL OUR BODILY RESURRECTION BE LIKE?
5. HOW CAN I FACE GOD'S JUDGMENT?
6. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THE "NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTH?"
7. WHAT COMFORT DO I HAVE NOW?

ENDNOTES

SUMMARIES

A FRIEND'S LAMENT

FOR FURTHER READING

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

CHAPTER TWO  
(Sample Chapter)  
**What Happens Right After Death?**

*We would rather be away from the body and  
at home with the Lord.*  
2 Corinthians 5:8

Home! What does “home” mean to you? At best, the idea of our earthly home includes:

- Family that brings out the best in each other
- Feeling safe in an atmosphere of love
- A place where I don’t have to hide who I am.

After death, we have a home that will surpass the best this life can offer because we will be “at home with the Lord.”

When the Apostle Paul says he would rather be “away from the body and at home with the Lord,” he is referring to heaven or paradise, the intermediate state between a Christian’s death and the resurrection of the body. When we die, our physical bodies will be left behind here on earth, but our souls (our unique personality that make us different from every other person) will go immediately into the presence of Christ. Jesus said to the thief on the cross,

*Truly I tell you, today  
you will be with me in paradise.*  
Luke 23:43

“Paradise” refers to a state of restful happiness in the presence of the Lord Jesus. Theologian N. T. Wright explains the meaning of paradise: “This state is not, clearly, the final destiny for which the Christian dead are bound, which is the bodily resurrection. But it is a state in which the dead are held firmly within the conscious love of God and the conscious presence of Jesus Christ while they await that day.”<sup>1</sup>

The Bible does not tell us a great deal about this intermediate state. Lack of detail is part of the grand mystery of God. But Paul affirms what we do know happens when believers die: they enter a state of being “at home with the Lord”—*a joyful awareness of being with Jesus*—which Paul exclaims is “far better.”

“Far better?” You and I might find it hard to agree that we would rather be “away from the body.” Most of us have a built-in, God-given, desire to live as long as we can, unless suffering or despair overwhelm us in the present.

Yet Paul asserts it is *far better* to be away from the body because our souls will be “at home with the Lord.” That means departure from the body at death is not a journey into nothingness or unconsciousness or sleep. Rather, it is a journey of the believer’s soul into the very presence of Christ. The soul will be *with Christ*. We will be with the one who gave his very life to rescue us *from* a hellish state *for* triumphant glory!

Does our suffering now lessen the glory of being at home with the Lord? No, not according to the Apostle Paul.

*For I consider that the sufferings  
of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to  
us.*

Romans 8:18

Compared to the coming glory, any suffering we go through now will fade into insignificance. Why? Our suffering now can be swallowed up in *hope*—the eager anticipation of all God’s promises fulfilled for every follower of Christ.

All God’s promises are not completely fulfilled at death. We must still await the promise of the resurrection of our bodies. But immediately after we die, going home to be with the Lord will be glory unveiled for every believer.

*Going home, going home,  
I'm just going home.  
Quiet-like, slip away -  
I'll be going home.  
It's not far, just close by;  
Jesus is the Door;  
Work all done, laid aside,*

*Fear and grief no more.  
Friends are there, waiting now.  
He is waiting, too.  
See His smile! See His hand!  
He will lead me through.*<sup>2</sup>

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## **Summary**

Right after death, the soul (the true identity) of the believer is “at home with the Lord” and that is better than we can imagine.

## **Prayer**

“Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, help me stand; I am tired, I am weak, I am worn; through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the light; take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.”<sup>3</sup>

## **Reflection**

1. What does the idea of “home” mean to you?
2. What images come to mind in being “at home with the Lord?”
3. What comfort in this chapter will you focus on?

*Why are you cast down, O my soul,  
and why are you in turmoil within me?  
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,  
my salvation and my God.*  
Psalm 42:5