

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE

of Christian believers
between leaving this body and its future resurrection
A tentative approach by Galen Currah
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Learning objectives

- Define the 'intermediate state'.
- Test some common evangelical beliefs.
- Marshall biblical data (proof texts).
- Summarize apparent revealed truth.

Lesson Theme

"We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord."

2 Corinthians 5:8 NIV

The intermediate state

"The period of time between our bodily death and our future bodily resurrection."

Believe and
persevere



Absent from
our body



Present with
the Lord



Rise bodily at
Christ's return



Reign with Christ
forever



Believe

Die

Rest

Rise

Reign

The Intermediate State

Some common evangelical beliefs

- Angels will come escort us to heaven.
- We shall see our believing loved ones.
- Our deceased infants are there waiting for us.
- Some have been waiting for hundreds of years.
- We will become angels with halo and wings.
- We must attend endless church services.
- We shall be embarrassed by our past sins.

[Evidence from before Jesus' bodily resurrection](#)

Taken bodily into heaven (sky).

Genesis 5:4 Enoch walked with God, and he was no more, for God took him.

Hebrews 11:5 By faith Enoch was taken up, so that he did not experience death, and he was not found, because God took him up.

2 Kings 2:11 Suddenly a fiery chariot with horses of fire appeared and separated between the two of them. Elijah went up in the storm to the heavens.

Tentative hypothesis: God has taken some righteous individuals bodily into the afterlife.

Taken spiritually into the afterlife

1 Samuel 28:11–13 When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice, and the woman said to Saul, "Why did you deceive me? You are Saul!" The king said to her, "Do not be afraid! What do you see?" And the woman said to Saul, "I see a god coming up from the ground!"

Luke 16:22–23 Now it happened that the poor man died, and he was carried away by the angels to [Abraham's side]. And the rich man also died and was buried. And in Hades he lifted up his eyes as he was in torment and saw Abraham from a distance, and Lazarus [at his side].

Matthew 17:3 Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with him.

Luke 23:43 [Jesus] said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."

Tentative hypothesis: Righteous humans who died used to go into the afterlife where they appear in an identifiable, bodily form.

Delight in God's presence

Psalms 49:15 God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me.

Psalms 16:11 In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Psalms 73:24-26 You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me with honor. Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire other than you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Psalms 139:8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.

Tentative hypothesis: The righteous anticipated being protected by God in the underworld, and one day being received into his presence in heaven.

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Evidence from after Jesus' bodily resurrection

According to Jesus

John 14:3 "I go and prepare a place for you."

Tentative hypothesis: Jesus is preparing a place in which we may dwell with him.

According to the Acts

Acts 7:55-56 [Steven] said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"

Tentative hypothesis: Upon death, the righteous are able to see Jesus in the heavens.

According to Paul

Philippians 1:23 I am hard pressed [between the two options], having the desire to depart and to be with Christ, [for this is very much better].

2 Corinthians 5:6-9 While we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord— for we live by faith, not by sight— so we are confident and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.

2 Corinthians 5:1 If our earthly house, the tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made by hands, eternal in the heavens.

Tentative hypothesis: Upon physical death, the righteous go into the presence of Jesus, awaiting their resurrected body.

According to Hebrews

Hebrews 12:22–24 You have come to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to tens of thousands of angels, to the festal gathering and assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous people made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and [to the sprinkled blood] that speaks better than Abel's does.

Tentative hypothesis: Upon physical death, the righteous in Christ enter the heavenly Jerusalem.

According to Peter

2 Peter 3:8–9 One day with the Lord is [as] a thousand years, and a thousand years is [as] one day. The Lord is not delaying the promise, as some consider slowness.

2 Peter 3:13 According to his promise, we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness resides.

Tentative hypothesis: The time between death and the end-time events will seem but a few days.

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According to the Apocalypse

Revelation 3:4–5 They will walk with me in white, because they are worthy. The one who conquers in this way will be dressed in white clothing, and I will never erase his name from the book of life, and I will declare his name before my Father and before his angels.

Revelation 3:21 The one who conquers, I will grant to him to sit down with me on my throne, as I also have conquered and have sat down with my Father on his throne.

Revelation 6:11 To each one of them a white robe was given, and it was said to them that they should rest yet a short time, until the number of their fellow slaves and their brothers who were about to be killed as they had been were completed also.

Revelation 7:9–10 A great crowd that no one was able to number, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, dressed in white robes and with palm branches in their hands. And they were crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

Revelation 7:14–17 “These are the ones who have come out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Because of this, they are before the throne of God, and they serve him day and night in his temple, and the one who is seated on the throne [will shelter] them. They will not be hungry any longer or be thirsty any longer, nor will the sun ever beat down on them, nor any heat, because the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and will lead them to springs of living waters, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

Revelation 18:20; 19:4 O heaven, you saints and apostles and prophets! ... a great multitude in heaven, saying, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power to our God

Tentative hypothesis: Jesus will share his glory with the righteous, and acknowledge them before his Father. They will serve as priests in the heavens, praising God, and God will comfort them.

Summary

- Upon death of their body, before the resurrection of the dead, Christian believers go to be with the Lord Jesus, who shares his authority with them, honoring them before the Father, and rewarding them for their good deeds.
- They are dressed in priestly clothes and serve God who comforts them.
- This intermediate state may seem but a few days, before believers return to earth with Jesus, receive their resurrection body, and begin reigning with him over all the nations of the world.