

At His coming He will descend from οὐρανός. When Paul therefore says that he has a desire to depart and to be with Christ, he is saying that he desires to be with Christ in οὐρανός. To depart from the flesh in this passage means to depart from the body, to depart from this present life. His statements that to die is gain, and to be with Christ is far better, suggest all sorts of positive, encouraging, exciting ideas about the intermediate state of the righteous!

II Corinthians 5:1-9 -- "For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the οὐρανοῖς. For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from οὐρανός; inasmuch as we, having put it on, shall not be found naked. For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed, but to be clothed, in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now he who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge. Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord -- for we walk by faith, not by sight -- we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. Therefore also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him."

Here we learn that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord in οὐρανός. At physical death, the union between the soul/spirit and the body is dissolved, and the soul/spirit passes into the intermediate state. For the one trusting in Christ, physical death means that the soul/spirit passes into heaven (the third heaven) where Christ is present, both in His divine and His human nature. For the believer, physical death is the portal into οὐρανός.

John 14:1-6 -- "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way where I am going.' Thomas said to Him, 'Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?' Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.' "

Again, this passage does not employ the word οὐρανός, yet it clearly refers to οὐρανός in the sense of the third heaven (the abode of God) under the expression "My Father's house". In this passage Jesus was attempting to comfort His disciples and to answer (in a very general way, without getting into details) some of their questions. Where was Jesus going? How was He going to get there? And what was the place like where He was going? One outstanding evangelist and Bible teacher has suggested that Jesus answered these very questions by His assertion in verse 6. What is the way to οὐρανός? Jesus is the way, through faith in Him and His redemption! Where is οὐρανός? Where Jesus is, 'tis heaven there! And what is οὐρανός like? It is like Jesus! He is the life of οὐρανός. Heaven is filled with His light, His truth, His goodness, His beauty. And apparently this is all that His disciples need to know about οὐρανός!