

Catechism Sec. 9: The Benefits Of Salvation At Death

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Q36. What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death?

A36. The souls of believers, at their death, are made perfect in holiness¹ and do immediately pass into glory^{2, 3, 4}; and their bodies, belonging to Christ⁵, do rest in their graves⁶ until the resurrection⁷.

Notes: The expression "belonging to Christ" replaces "being still united to Christ", the Bible reference being changed also from 1 Thess. 4:14 to 1 Cor. 6:14-15, 19-20.

1. Heb. 12:23, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect.

2. Phil. 1:23, For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.

3. 2 Cor. 5:8, We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

4. Luke 23:43, And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

5. 1 Cor. 6:14-15, 19-20, And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

6. Isa. 57:2, He shall enter into peace; they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.

7. Job 19:26, And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God.

Comments:

1. We believe that *dichotomy*, i.e. the teaching that the human person is made up of two components, viz. body and soul (or spirit), is the teaching of Scripture (Gen. 2:7; 1 Pet. 1:9; Acts 2:31), although there others who believe in *trichotomy* (body, soul, and spirit). The Scriptures used in support of trichotomy (e.g. 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 4:12) are capable of reasonable explanations according to the context. For example, "spirit" and "soul" may be used together for emphasis, as in 1 Thessalonians 5:23. At death, body and soul are separated. This is the *intermediate state*. The soul of a believer is led to heaven immediately to be with the Lord (Psalm 23:4). The soul is not: (i) left to wander aimlessly on earth; (ii) in "soul sleep" in which it is unconscious; (iii) in purgatory, where

it is purified for ultimate admittance to heaven. The body, which is buried, will return to dust (Gen. 3:9; Acts 13:36) until the day of resurrection

2. Christians should prefer burial of the body to cremation, although how the body is disposed off will not affect the resurrection. This is because: (i) godly people in the Bible practised burial (e.g. Gen. 23:19; Acts 2:29); (ii) burning is a symbol of God's judgement (e.g. Matt. 3:10-12; 7:19; 13:41-42; Heb. 6:8; Rev. 20:15); (iii) the body has been redeemed by the Lord and should be disposed off lovingly and respectfully (1 Cor. 6:19-20). An ancient heresy called Gnosticism taught that the soul is pure while the body is evil. Up to today, there are those who hold to such a view of the body. While alive, Christians should take care of the body instead of harming it by smoking, drinking, gluttony, etc. Although it is possible to go to extremes, those who live a sedentary lifestyle should engage in exercise so that body and soul are offered up to God in sacrificial service (1 Tim. 4:8 cf. Rom. 12:1-2).

Q37. What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the day of judgement?

A37. At the day of judgement, believers being raised up in glory¹, shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted², and made perfectly blessed in body and soul in the full enjoyment of God³ to all eternity⁴.

Notes: In the question, "at the day of judgement" replaces "at the resurrection", to conform with Q39. The answer has been adjusted accordingly. Following Spurgeon, we have included "in body and soul", although Spurgeon puts it as "both in soul and body".

1. 1 Cor. 15:43, It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.

2. Matt. 10:32, Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.

3. 1 John 3:2, Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

4. 1 Thess. 4:17, Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

Comments:

1. The elements of the body that have turned to dust will be regathered and reconstituted at the resurrection such that it will possess glorious qualities and power, like that of the Lord's resurrected body (1 Cor. 15:43, 49). The redeemed soul will be brought by the Lord from heaven and be united to the resurrected body (1 Thess. 4:14). The righteous and the wicked will be separated and come under the Lord's judgement. Those who belong to the Lord will be openly declared as not guilty, not because of any good found in them or done by them, but because the Lord has paid for their sins and cancelled their guilt by His death on the cross (Matt. 25:32-33; 2 Cor. 5:18-20). All the redeemed will be caught up in the air and taken to be with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:17). The existing universe will be melted down, and a new universe will be created, in which righteousness is found (2 Pet. 3:10-13). Believers will live with God in the new earth, which is in heaven - for heaven will be on earth (Rev. 21:1-4). We will be able to recognize one another. There will be no marriage in heaven, but our relationships will be lifted to a higher and growing level of blessedness (Mark 12:25).

2. Believers will be judged together with unbelievers (Luke 8:17; 12:2-3; 1 Cor. 4:5). It would appear that the sins of believers will be made known to all, although they are acquitted because of what Christ has done to save them. "Justice will be done, and seen to be done." Salvation will be seen clearly to be "by grace, through faith, in Christ alone". But how carefully believers must live while on earth! Equally, the good done by believers will all come to light, and they will be rewarded accordingly (Matt. 25:20-23; Rev. 22:12).

Q38. What shall be done to the wicked at their death?

A38. The souls of the wicked, at their death, are cast into the torments of hell¹, and their bodies lie in their graves until the resurrection and judgement of the great day².

1. Luke 16:22-24, So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³ And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.'

2. John 5:28-29, Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

Comments:

1. All traces of the image of God would have been erased from the unbeliever's soul, so that whatever blessing, comfort and restraint of God are withdrawn. The unbeliever's full wickedness becomes obvious as he is cast into the torments of hell. His body turns to dust like that of the believer, awaiting the day of judgement.

2. Hell is truly a place of torment, for the likes of Esau, Jeroboam the son of Nebat, Ahab, Jezebel, and Judas Iscariot would be there, in the full ugliness of their wickedness. Furthermore, the full force of God's wrath upon the wicked will be experienced. Hell is described as "the furnace of fire", where there will be "wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 13:42).

Q39. What shall be done to the wicked at the day of judgment?

A39. At the day of judgment¹, the wicked being raised up in dishonour², shall be openly sentenced and condemned to the unspeakable torments of body and soul in hell³, with the devil and his angels for all eternity⁴.

Notes: The answer in Keach's Catechism has been adjusted to conform with that of Q37.

1. John 5:28-29, Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice ²⁹ and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

2. Dan. 12:2, And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.

3. 2 Thess. 1:9, These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.

4. *Matt. 25:41, Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'*

Comments:

1. The wicked will be resurrected, but with an inglorious and dishonourable body. After being sentenced and condemned, he is thrown, body and soul, back into hell to share the torments with the devil and his angels for ever. This is called the "second death", which is worse than the first (Rev. 20:14; 21:8). God would be seen to be just, while the unbeliever would be seen to deserve the condemnation upon him. The error of *Annihilationism* teaches that the souls of the wicked gradually disappear out of existence (i.e. are "annihilated").

2. The Bible seems to indicate that heaven is a dynamic place in which are blessed activities and growth in love, knowledge, and glory (Rev. 7:15-17; 21:22-22:5). Similarly, we can expect that hell will be a dynamic place in which is continual wickedness and increase in the sufferings and torments. The torments of hell are unspeakable! How we must be reconciled to God quickly! How we must be urgent in soul-winning!

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