

WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

SHORTER CATECHISM

LESSON # 25 (Q2LES12) - BENEFITS AT DEATH AND THE RESURECTION

1. **Prayer**
2. **Bible reading: Romans 6: 1 - 23**
3. **Review:** We have been talking about redemption and benefits. We have completed our discussion on benefits received from Christ in this life, with a discussion about perseverance to the end. We learned that “to the end” referred to the end of our life here on earth, that once saved, our salvation cannot be lost; that it is possible to fall away, and into serious sin, but not to loose salvation. Interestingly, we learned that salvation, and assurance of salvation may not be given at the same time. We also learned about works, that all good works are from God through the Holy Spirit, and that, try as hard as we can, we cannot come close to God’s goodness.
4. **Introduction** - This week we are going to talk about two different benefits, those benefits received from Christ at death, and those received from Christ at the resurrection. These subjects are covered by questions 37 and 38 of the SC. There is much agreement on this subject in the WCF, LC, and SC. Interestingly, the chapters which deal with these subjects in the WCF are at the very end, chapters 32 and 33.
5. **Questions:**
 - Question 37: **What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death?**
Answer: **The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection.**
 - Question 38: **What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection?**
Answer: **At the resurrection, believers being raised up in glory, shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgement, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.**
6. **,at their death**

- a. The WCF, LC, and the SC are very consistent in their answers on this one. So let's look at the SC question, and the equivalent question and answer in the LC. The SC question 37 is: *"What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death?"*

Remember, we've been talking about the difference in the language of the LC and the SC. The LC asks in question 86: *"What is the communion in glory with Christ, which the members of the invisible church enjoy immediately after death?"*

- b. What are the benefits believers receive from Christ at death?

The SC and LC answers are very similar. SC answer 37 says: *"The souls of believers are at their death, made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory, and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their grave till the resurrection."*

LC question 86 answers: *"The communion in glory with Christ, which the members of the invisible church enjoy immediately after death, is, in that their souls are then made perfect in holiness, and received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies, which even in death continue united to Christ, and rest in their graves as in their beds, till at the last day they be again united to their soul."*

So the benefits received at death are:

- Souls made perfect in holiness
 - Souls immediately pass into glory
 - Bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection.
- c. What is meant by "Perfect holiness"? TV says the perfect holiness of believers' souls consists of:
- *Their perfect freedom from the stain and pollution, from the being, or any inclination unto sin. (Rev 21:25 – 27 ⁽²⁵⁾And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. ⁽²⁶⁾And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it. ⁽²⁷⁾And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.")*
 - *In their perfect rectitude of soul, and full conformity unto the image of Christ." (Eph 4:12 – 13 ⁽¹²⁾For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: ⁽¹³⁾Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:")*

- d. Pass into glory. What does this mean? What happens to the soul between death and the resurrection?

There seems to be a good bit of controversy over this question. But the bible is very clear, with enough scripture proofs to form a multi-faced solid.

Upon death, man's spirit joins God in paradise. (**Eccl 12:7** "***Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.***")

- e. Do rest in their grave till the resurrection. LC adds "as if asleep"
- f. Now lets look at what the WCF has to say. C32p1 says: "*The bodies of men, after death, return to dust and see corruption: but their souls (which neither die nor sleep) having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them: the souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God, in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies.*"

Note the WCF says: "*but their souls (which neither die nor sleep)*". The LC says in the answer to q86, in part, "*which even in death continue united to Christ, and rest in their graves as in their beds, till at the last day they be again united to their soul*"

The body rests in the grave "as in their beds", but the soul is present with God.

- g. What happens to the soul's of the damned at death? While not addressed in the SC, the WCF and the LC have this to say on this subject. It should make us think hard on both sin and death. This addition is contained in the second half of WCF c32p1, and without a separate question in the answer to LC question 86. The subject is: *what happens to the wicked (unbelievers)?*

The last part of the answer to LC question 86 says: "*Whereas the souls of the wicked are at their death cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, and their bodies kept in their graves, as in their prisons, till the resurrection and judgement of the great day.*"

The last part of Chapter 32, para 1 says: "*And the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgement of the great day. (Luke 16:22 – 23 ⁽²²⁾And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; ⁽²³⁾And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.*")

7. at the resurrection

a. What the SC covers in one question, the LC covers in four, and contains much applicable information not found in the SC. Lets look at some of it.

b. What is the resurrection?

WCF c32p2 says, in part: *“and all the dead shall be raised up, with the selfsame bodies and none other, although with different qualities, which shall be united again to their soul forever.”*

LC question 87 adds, in part: *“that at the last day there shall be a general resurrection of the dead,and the self-same bodies of the dead which were laid in the grave, being then again united to their souls for ever, shall be raised up by the power of Christ, and by virtue of his resurrection as their head, shall be raised in power, spiritual, incorruptible, and made like to his glorious body.”* **(John 5:28 “⁽²⁸⁾Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall here his voice.⁽²⁹⁾And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”)** **(1 Cor 15: various verses)**

So the resurrection is the reuniting of the soul with the body.

c. What happens to those who are alive at the resurrection?

The answer to question 87 includes this: *“when them that are then found alive shall in a moment be changed;”*

WCF, chapter 32, para 2 says: *“At the last day, such as are found alive shall not die, but be changed:”* **(1 Thess 4:17 “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”)**

d. Who shall be raised up at the resurrection?

WCF, c32p2 says: *“and all the dead shall be raised up,”*

LC question 87 adds: *“both the just and unjust”* **(Acts 24:15 “And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.”)**

e. What will happen to the wicked?

WCF C32p3 says: *“The bodies of the unjust shall, by the power of Christ, be raised up in dishonor:”* **(Matt 25:33 “And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.”)**

- f. The resurrection is the last day when all the dead are raised up and reunited with their soul.

8. the day of judgement

- a. LC q88 asks, *“What shall immediately follow the resurrection?”*

It answers, “Immediately after the resurrection shall follow the general and final judgement of angels and men; the day and hour whereof no man knoweth, that all may watch and pray, and be ever ready for the coming of the Lord.”

The final judgement.

- b. What is the judgement? WCF c33p1 says: *“God hath appointed a day, wherein He will judge the world in righteousness, by Jesus Christ, to whom all power and judgement is given of the Father. In which day, not only the apostate angels shall be judged, but likewise all persons that have lived upon earth shall appear before the tribunal of Christ, to give an account of their thoughts, words and deeds; and to receive according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil.”*

The day when all mankind will appear before Jesus Christ to be judged for the deeds of their life, whether good or evil. **(Luke 21: 35 – 36 ⁽³⁵⁾For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. ⁽³⁶⁾Watch thee therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”)**

- c. What will happen to the righteous on the day of judgement? WCF, c33p2 says: *“The end of God’s appointing this day is for the manifestation of the glory of His mercy, in the eternal salvation of the elect; ...For then shall the righteous go into everlasting life, and receive that fullness of joy and refreshing, which shall come from the presence of the Lord:*

LC question 90 adds: “At the day of judgement, the righteous, being caught up to Christ in the clouds, shall be set on his right hand, and there openly acknowledged and acquitted, shall join with him in the judging of reprobate angels and men, and shall be received into heaven, where they shall be fully and for ever freed from all sin and misery; filled with inconceivable joys, made perfectly holy and happy both in body and soul, in the company of innumerable saints and holy angels, but especially in the immediate vision and fruition of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, to all eternity. And

this perfect and full communion, which the members of the invisible church shall enjoy with Christ in glory, at the resurrection and day of judgement.”

A number of things will happen. According to LC q90, these are:

- be caught up to Christ in the clouds (**1 Thes 4:17** ***“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”***)
- be set on his right hand, and there openly acknowledged and acquitted (**Matt 25:33** ***“And he shall se the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.”***)
- join with him in the judging of reprobate angels and men (**1 Cor 6: 2 – 3** ***“(2)Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world: and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? (3)Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life?)***)
- shall be received into heaven (**Matt 25:34** ***“Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:”***)
- they shall be fully and for ever freed from all sin and misery; filled with inconceivable joys, made perfectly holy and happy both in body and soul, in the company of innumerable saints and holy angels, (**many**)
- but especially in the immediate vision and fruition of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, to all eternity (**1 John 3:2** ***“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall se him as he is.)***)

d. What will happen to the wicked on the day of judgement?

WCF, c33p2 says: *“and of His justice, in the damnation of the reprobate who are wicked and disobedient.but the wicked, who know not God, and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be cast into eternal torments, and be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.*

LC question 89 adds: *“At the day of judgement, the wicked shall be set on Christ’s left hand, and , upon clear evidence, and full conviction of their own consciences, shall have the fearful but just sentence of condemnation pronounced against them, and thereupon shall be cast out from the favorable presence of God, and the glorious fellowship with Christ, his saints, and all his holy angels, into hell, to be punished with unspeakable torments, both of the body and soul, with the devil and his angels for ever.”* **(2 Thes 1: 7 – 9 “⁽⁷⁾And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, ⁽⁸⁾In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: ⁽⁹⁾Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;”)**

- d. As a conclusion to the WCF, a final paragraph, paragraph 3, is added to chapter 33. It reads: *“As Christ would have us to be certainly persuaded that there shall be a day of judgement, both to deter all men from sin, and for the greater consolation of the godly in their adversity; so will He have that day unknown to men, that they may shake off all carnal security, and be always watchful, because they know not at what hour the Lord will come; and may be ever prepared to say, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, Amen.”*