

25. Death, resurrection and final judgement

WCF chapters 32-33 *Modern Language version – 1993 – OPC*

32.1. After death, the bodies of men decay and return to dust, but their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal existence, return immediately to God, who gave them. The souls of the righteous are then made perfect in holiness and received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory as they wait for the full redemption of their bodies. The souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness as they are kept for the judgment of the great day. Scripture recognizes no other place except these two for the souls which have been separated from their bodies.

2. At the last day those who are alive shall not die but shall be changed. All the dead shall be raised up with their selfsame bodies, and no other (although with different qualities), which shall be united again with their souls forever.

3. By the power of Christ the bodies of the unjust shall be raised to dishonor. The bodies of the just shall be raised to honor by his Spirit and brought into conformity with Christ's own glorious body.

From dust to dust: dying... yet not created to die

Genesis 3:19, "By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

Immortal souls...

Ecclesiastes 12:7, "... the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it."

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

Hebrews 12:23 , Philipians 1:23, 2 Corinthians 5:6

... awaiting the resurrection of the body

Romans 8:23, "And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies."

The destiny of the wicked

Jude 6-7, "And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day -- just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities..."

Luke 16:23-24, "The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried,²³ and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.²⁴ And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.'"

Never-dying, transformed, resurrected

1 Corinthians 15:51-52, "Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed."

John 5:28-29

Job 19:26-27

33.1. God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ, to whom all power and judgment has been given by the Father. In that day not only shall the apostate angels be judged, but also shall all people who have ever lived on earth appear before the judgment seat of Christ in order to give an account of their thoughts, words, and deeds, and to receive judgment according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil.

2. God's purpose in appointing this day is to manifest the glory of his mercy in the eternal salvation of the elect, and the glory of his justice in the damnation of the reprobate, who are wicked and disobedient. On that day the righteous shall go into everlasting life and receive that fullness of joy and refreshing which shall come from the presence of the Lord; but the wicked, who do not know God and who do not obey 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.

3. As Christ would have us to be absolutely convinced that there will be a day of judgment, both to deter all men from sin and to give greater consolation to the godly in their adversity, so will he have that day unknown to men, that they may shake off all carnal security, may always be watchful—because they do not know at what hour the Lord will come—and may always be prepared to say, “Come, Lord Jesus. Come quickly. Amen.”

The last judgement: who is judging whom?

Acts 17:31, John 5:22-27 (Jesus the judge)

Jude 6 and 2 Peter 2:4-9 (angels),
Romans 2:16, 14:10, Ecclesiastes 12:14 (all humans)

Applications for Christians:
No pride... no fear... godliness (e.g. Rom. 14, Matt. 12)...
evangelism

The purpose of the final judgement

It's about God not man – glorifying His mercy and His justice:

Romans 9:22-23, “What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,²³ in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory...”

The result of the final judgement

Matthew 25:21, “... enter into the joy of your master”

2 Thessalonians 1:5-10

A certain day... an unknown date... come Lord Jesus

Questions about cosmology, millennium, destiny of the Jews?
The WCF doesn't seek to answer.

Focus = personal persuasion of the coming day of judgement

When? No-one knows – Mathew 24:36

2 Corinthians 5:6-11

2 Peter 3:11, “... what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of the Lord...”

Revelation 22:20, “... Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.”

Personal response: for what should we give thanks... confess... pray?

Next week: What is the purpose of a church confession?