

Q37: What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death?

A37: 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.

Q38: What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection?

A38: At the resurrection, believers being raised up in glory, shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.

A. The Nature of Death

B. The Intermediate State

1. That there is one for those who die before Christ returns.
2. For unbelievers at death
 - a. A state of provisional torment for their souls
 - b. A state of imprisonment for their bodies as they await the resurrection unto the lake of fire.
3. For believers at death
 - a. A state of provisional glory for their souls.
 - b. A state of "sleep" for their bodies as they await the resurrection unto glory.

C. Contemporary Issues Surrounding Death for Believers

1. Burial and Cremation

Westminster Larger Catechism

Q133: What is the reason annexed to the fifth commandment, the more to enforce it?

A 133: The reason annexed to the fifth commandment, in these words, That thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee,[1] is an express promise of long life and prosperity, as far as it shall serve for God's glory and their own good, to all such as keep this commandment. [2]

Q1 35: What are the duties required in the sixth commandment?

A 135: The duties required in the sixth commandment are, all careful studies, and lawful endeavors, to preserve the life of ourselves [1] and others [2] by resisting all thoughts and purposes,[3] subduing all passions,[4] and avoiding all occasions,[5] temptations, [6] and practices, which tend to the unjust taking away the life of any;[7] by just defense thereof against violence,[8] patient bearing of the hand of God,[9] quietness of mind,[10] cheerfulness of spirit; [11] a sober use of meat,[12] drink,[13] physic,[14] sleep,[15] labor,[16] and recreations; [17] by charitable thoughts,[18] love,[19] compassion, [20] meekness, gentleness, kindness;[21] peaceable, [22] mild and courteous speeches and behavior;[23] forbearance, readiness to be reconciled, patient bearing and forgiving of injuries, and requiting good for evil;[24] comforting and succoring the distressed, and protecting and defending the innocent.[25]

Q136: What are the sins forbidden in the sixth commandment?

A136: The sins forbidden in the sixth commandment are, all taking away the life of ourselves, [1] or of others,[2] except in case of public justice, [3] lawful war,[4] or necessary defense;[5] the neglecting or withdrawing the lawful and necessary means of preservation of life;[6] sinful anger,[7] hatred,[8] envy,[9] desire of revenge; [10] all excessive passions, [11] distracting cares; [12] immoderate use of meat, drink,[13] labor,[14] and recreations; [15] provoking words, [16] oppression, [17] quarreling, [18] striking, wounding, [19] and: Whatsoever else tends to the destruction of the life of any. [20]

Additional References:

Frame, John, *Medical Ethics*, 1988

Davis, J. Jefferson, *Evangelical Ethics*, 2004

Kloosterman, Dr. Nelson, *Christian Ethics Course Syllabus*

2. What Constitutes Death?

- a. Respiratory (heart and lungs) and Brain Function (Frame, p. 61)
- b. How about organ donation? Should those with a vested interest in harvesting organs be making the decisions regarding when one is actually considered dead?

3. Prevention of Death?

- a. Death as unnatural and yet inevitable (and for the Christian, not final) -
"Because of the influence of the Christian tradition in Western culture, death has been seen as unnatural, as an evil to be opposed, and this value system has influenced the medical profession in its death-resisting efforts... At the same time, the Bible teaches that death, under the present conditions, is inevitable... Medicine's death-resisting instincts must be tempered by ones that are in some sense death-accepting" (J. Davis, Evangelical Ethics, p. 192).
- b. Ordinary versus Extraordinary Measures (Frame, p. 65; Davis, p.189)
- c. Killing versus Letting Die (Frame, p. 67; Davis, p. 189)
 - (1) Suicide
 - (2) Euthanasia
 - (3) Letting "nature" take its course
- d. Restoring health vs. Sustaining life vs. Prolonging death

4. Care for those who are dying?

- a. Palliative Care
 - (1) Giving comfort and controlling pain (see Davis, p. 190)
 - (2) Providing food and water (starvation is never a legitimate "treatment option")
 - (3) Providing normal nursing care
- b. Advanced Directives (Kloosterman, p. 101)
 - (1) The living will - some problems
 - (2) The durable power of attorney - some advantages