

What is Death & Glorification?

Objectives are to discuss the following subtopics:

1. Why Do Christians Die?
2. When Christians Die?
3. When Non-Christians Die?
4. What Happens When People Die?
5. When Are Christians Raised From The Dead?

Why Do Christians Die?

- **Death Is Not a Punishment for Christians.** Paul tells us clearly that there is “no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1). The entire penalty for our sins has been paid.
- **Death Is the Final Outcome of Living in a Fallen World.** In short, we still live in a fallen world and our experience of salvation is still incomplete. Although death does not come to us as a penalty for our individual sins (for that has been paid by Christ), it does come to us as a result of living in a fallen world, where the effects of sin have not all been removed. Related to the experience of death are other results of the fall that harm our physical bodies and signal the presence of death in the world—Christians as well as non-Christians experience aging, illnesses, injuries, and natural disasters (such as floods, violent storms, and earthquakes).

“For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.” (1 Cor 15:25-26 ESV)

- **God Uses the Experience of Death to Complete Our Sanctification.** We should view the aging and weakness and sometimes sickness leading up to death as another kind of discipline that God allows us to go through in order that through this process our sanctification might be furthered and ultimately completed when we go to be in the Lord’s presence. This discipline is not punishment but God’s positive purpose of maturation strengthening our trust in him and our obedience, and ultimately increasing our ability to glorify him. God allows us to suffer much like He allowed His own Son to be made “perfect through suffering” (Heb 5:8, 2:10). All of this suffering is for our good.

*“For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us **for our good**, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” (Heb 12:6, 10-11 ESV)*

- **Our Experience of Death Completes Our Union With Christ.** Through death we imitate Christ in what he did and thereby experience closer union with him. We are fellow heirs

with Christ “provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be gloried with him” (Rom 8:17). See also 1 Peter 4:13, Heb 12:2, 1 Pet 2:21.

“But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.” (1 Pet 4:13 ESV)

- **Our Obedience to God Is More Important Than Preserving Our Own Lives.** The world’s goal of preserving one’s own physical life at all costs is *not* the highest goal for a Christian: **obedience** to God and **faithfulness** to him in every circumstance is far more important.

“But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.” (Acts 20:24 ESV)

Over and over again, the Apostle Paul put his own life at risk, believing it was better to be obedient to God than to preserve his life. (Acts 14:20, 14:21-22) He endured many sufferings and dangers (2 Cor 11:23-27), often risking his own life in order to obey Christ fully, so he could say at the end of his life that he “fought the good fight” (2 Tim 4:6-7).

Jesus commanded the church at Smyrna, “Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Rev 2:10). See also Rev 12:11.

When Christians Die?

- **Our Own Death.** The New Testament encourages us to view our own death not with fear but with joy at the prospect of going to be with Christ. Paul says, “We would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.” (2 Cor 5:8)

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.” (Phil 1:21-23 ESV)

“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” (Rev 14:13)

*“For I am convinced that **neither death**, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Rom 8:38-39)

We no longer have to live in the lifelong bondage of fear of death like unbelievers because the blood of Jesus has delivered us. (Heb 2:15)

- **The Death of Christian Friends and Relatives.** We will experience genuine sorrow—but mixed with joy that they have gone to be with the Lord.

“Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him.” (Acts 8:2)

We should not feel guilty or even think that we have a lack of faith because we mourn deeply over the death of a loved one. Even Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus “wept” (Jn 11:35). Even Paul himself said that he would have had “sorrow upon sorrow” (Phil 2:27) if Epaphroditus had died. Nevertheless, we are NOT to grieve like the world “who has no hope” (1 Thess 4:13). We are NOT to grieve with bitter despair and hopelessness. Our mourning should be mixed with worship of God and thanksgiving for the life of the loved one who has died just like King David, & Job did when their children died (2 Sam 12:20, Job 1:20-21).

When Non-Christians Die?

- When unbelievers die, the sorrow we feel is *not* mingled with the joy of assurance that they have gone to be with the Lord forever. The Apostle Paul had great and deep sorrow over his kinsmen who had rejected Christ. He said, “my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen by race.” (Rom 9:1-3)
- We often do not have absolute certainty that a person has persisted in refusal to trust in Christ all the way to the point of death.
- Nevertheless, after a non-Christian has died, it would be wrong to give any indication to others that we think that person has gone to heaven. It would also diminish the need of those living to trust in Christ. However, It is often very helpful in such circumstances to speak with genuine thankfulness about the good qualities that we have noticed and been encouraged by in the life of the person who has died. King David did this when King Saul had died. (2 Sam 1:19-25)

What Happens When People Die?

- **The Souls of Believers Go Immediately Into God’s Presence.** Death is a temporary cessation of bodily life and a separation of the soul from the body. The soul of a believer goes immediately into the presence of God with rejoicing at death, while their body remains on the earth and is buried. (Phil 1:23, Luke 23:43, Heb 12:23)

“So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ” (2 Corinthians 5:6-8, ESV)

- The Bible Does Not Teach the Doctrine of Purgatory. The fact that the Bible teaches that souls go directly into the presence of God means that there is no such thing as purgatory.
 - The doctrine of Purgatory is a Roman Catholic teaching that comes out of the Apocrypha, particularly 2 Maccabees 12:42-45.

“[Judas Maccabeus, the leader of the Jewish forces] also took a collection, man by man, to the amount of 2,000 drachmas of silver, and sent it to Jerusalem to provide for a sin offering. In doing this he acted very well and honorably,

taking into account the resurrection. For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. But if he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore he made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin.”

- Purgatory is the place where the souls of believers go to be further purified from sin until they are ready to be admitted into heaven. According to this view, the sufferings of purgatory are given to God in substitute for the punishment for sins that believers should have received in time but did not.
 - Not only do we reject the idea that the Apocrypha should be treated as inerrant Scripture, but this doctrine of purgatory is directly in opposition to the sufficient atonement of Christ’s death on the cross. This doctrine teaches that we must add something to the redemptive work of Christ, and that his redemptive work for us was not enough to pay the penalty for all our sins.
 - The teaching that prayers for the dead can be offered is also found in 2 Maccabess 12:42-45. Roman Catholics teach that offerings can be made to God to deliver the dead from their sin. All of these teachings are contrary to Scripture.
- The Bible Does Not Teach the Doctrine of “Soul Sleep.”
- This doctrine teaches that when believers die they go into a state of unconscious existence, and the next thing that they are conscious of will be when Christ returns and raises them to eternal life.
 - When Scripture represents death as “sleep” it is simply a metaphorical expression used to indicate that death is only temporary for Christians, just as sleep is temporary. Scripture indicates that the souls of believers go immediately into God’s presence and enjoy fellowship with Him there. (2 Cor 5:8, Heb 12:22-24, Rev 6:9-11, 7:9-10)
- “And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.” ”*
(Luke 23:43, ESV)
- Did Old Testament Believers Enter Immediately Into God’s Presence?
- Some teach that the souls of believers prior to Christ’s resurrection went to a place of limbo, waiting for Christ’s work of redemption to be complete. This is sometimes called *limbus partum*, or simply limbo. (Common in Roman Catholic teaching)
 - Scripture references are limited in regard to Old Testament believers, but the few passages that are present ***do not*** indicate a state of limbo. Rather they teach that there was no time of waiting away from God’s presence, but immediate conscious enjoyment in the presence of God.
- “Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.”* (Gen 5:24, Heb 11:5)

Lesson # 11 - What is Death & Glorification?

Elijah was not taken to a place on the boarder of hell, but he “went up by a whirlwind *into heaven.*” (2 Kings 2:11, Matt 17:3)

David is confident that he will “dwell in the house of the Lord forever” (Ps 23:6)

“I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”? He is not God of the dead, but of the living.” (Matthew 22:32, ESV)

- Should We Pray for the Dead? (That is, should we pray that God would change a person’s eternal status or destiny?)
 - The fact that souls of believers go immediately into God’s presence means that we should **NOT** pray for the dead. Furthermore, the souls of unbelievers who die go to a place of eternal punishment and it does not good to pray for them either since their final destiny has been settled. Other than the book of Maccabees 12:42-45, praying for the dead is NOT taught in the Bible!

- For believers, final heavenly reward will be based on deeds done in this life, as Scripture repeatedly testifies. There is no indication that anything can change that.

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.” (2 Corinthians 5:10, ESV)

- **The Souls of Unbelievers Go Immediately to Eternal Punishment.** Scripture never encourages us to think that people will have a second chance to trust in Christ after death. In fact, the situation is quite the contrary. Jesus’ story about the rich man and Lazarus gives no hope that people can cross from hell to heaven after they have died: though the rich man in hell 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.’ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.” (Luke 16:24-26, ESV)

- Scripture is clear that there is a day of judgment coming that is final, and that judgment is determined based upon what a person did in his/her life. (Heb 9:27, Matt 25:31-46, Rom 2:5-10, 2 Cor 5:10)
- Scripture indicates that there is no second chance for anyone, not even those who have never heard the Gospel. Condemnation is just because every man is a sinner both by nature (Romans 5) and by choice.
- The idea that some have a second chance would destroy any motivation for evangelism and missionary activity today, and is not consistent with the intense missionary zeal that was felt by the New Testament church as a whole, and the Apostles.

- Scripture clearly does not teach annihilationism, which is a doctrine that says unbelievers cease to exist (God annihilates them) either immediately upon death or else after suffering for a period of time. (Matt 25:46, Rev 14:11, 20:10)

What is Glorification?

When Are Christians Raised From The Dead?

- **BFC Article 24 - Resurrection**

24-1 The bodily resurrection of Christ is the basis for the resurrection of man. At the return of the Lord the bodies of the righteous dead will be raised, and the living believers will be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air. Believers will, at the resurrection, receive spiritual and immortal bodies like Christ's own glorious body.

24-2 The event of the resurrection is divided into two stages, separated by a period of a thousand years and differing in respect to both their subjects and their issues. The first resurrection includes only the righteous dead. The second resurrection is universal and occurs at the close of the millennium when all the unregenerate dead are raised to be brought before the great White Throne for judgment.

- **Glorification (Receiving a Resurrection Body)**

- When Christ redeemed us he did not just redeem our spirits (or souls)—he redeemed us as whole persons, and this includes the redemption of our bodies. Therefore the application of Christ's work of redemption to us will not be complete until our bodies are entirely set free from the effects of the fall and brought to that state of perfection for which God created them.
- The stage in the application of redemption when we receive resurrection bodies is called **glorification**. It will happen when Christ returns and raises from the dead the bodies of all believers for all time who have died, and reunites them with their souls, and changes the bodies of all believers who remain alive, thereby giving all believers at the same time perfect resurrection bodies like his own.

“And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.” (Romans 8:30, ESV)

“But our citizenship is in heaven and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.” (Phil 3:20-21)

“When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” ” (1 Corinthians 15:54-55, ESV)

- **What Will Our Resurrection Bodies Be Like?** Using the example of sowing a seed in the ground and then watching it grow into something much more wonderful, Paul goes on to explain in more detail what our resurrection bodies will be like:

*“So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is **imperishable**. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in **glory**. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in **power**. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a **spiritual** body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. ”* (1 Corinthians 15:42-44, ESV)
- Imperishable bodies: Our new bodies will never wear out or grow old or even be subject to any kind of sickness or disease. They will be completely healthy and strong forever.
- Glorified bodies: Our new bodies will be beautiful and attractive. We will no longer have “dishonorable” or unattractive bodies, but we will look ‘glorious’ in beauty. Our bodies will also have a ‘glory’ or visible radiance about them. (Mt 13:43, Dan 12:3, Mt 17:2, 1 Cor 15:49)
- Powerful bodies: In contrast to our natural “weak” bodies, we will have new powerful bodies given full strength without disease or sickness. This power will not be like God’s power, but full and complete human power and strength that God intended human beings to have in their bodies when He created them.
- Spiritual bodies: By spiritual, Scripture does not mean ‘nonphysical.’ Our new physical bodies will be fully subject to the characteristics and desires of the Holy Spirit, rather than the sinful will and flesh and desires of this age.
- **Will there be continuity between our present earthly bodies & our new heavenly bodies?** Yes, it appears that there will be continuity. Jesus is the primary example that we can use to understand the details of our new bodies. When Jesus received his resurrection body, it was a physical body able to be touched, able to eat, and looked very similar to his former earthly body. While His body was “changed” the disciples were able to recognize him, even though they did not do so immediately. Scripture teaches that people will be recognizable in heaven. (Mt 8:11, Luke 9:30, 33, Mt 27:52-53)
- **The unbelieving dead will be raised for judgment on the day of Final Judgment.** There are passages that imply that the bodies of unbelievers will also be raised from the dead in order to face the final judgment. (Jn 5:29, Acts 24:15, Matt 25:31-46, Dan 12:2)