

- 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.**

**Scripture References:** Luke 16:23, 23:43; Philippians 1:22-24; 1 Corinthians 5:6-8; 1 Thessalonians 4:14; Romans 8:23; Revelations 14:13, 19:8; Acts 7:55-59; John 5:28-29; Hebrews 12:23; Isaiah 57:2

DQ1: What is death?

DQ2: Is the death of believer different from the death of non-believer? If so, how?

DQ3: What happens to the souls of believers at their death?

DQ4: What happens to the souls of non-believers at their death?

DQ5: What happens to the bodies of believers at their death?

DQ6: What happens to the bodies of non-believers at their death?

DQ7: What happens to the souls and bodies?

DQ8: Which is more important, the soul or the body?

**Notes:**

Death brings fear into people. There are a few reasons for this. First, death separates the living from the dead. Second, death is mysterious because there are too many unknown things about after death. Third, there is uncertainty regarding heaven and hell. Fourth, there is a tremendous lack of knowledge about what death is.

Death causes many to be torn and stressed. Some believe that death marks the end of life and will simply end their life in suicide. We must have proper knowledge of the Bible on the subject of death in order to overcome fear and anxieties about death.

“What is death?” It is a very philosophical, theological, Biblical and practical question, isn’t it? One could not think of a more practical question than this question. People say that there are two things that we cannot avoid in life: taxes and death. No one can avoid death. It is a Biblical statement and yet a practical and common reality. Occasionally, people romanticize death in their own minds, leading them to destruction. Some believe that death will solve all their problems and foolishly bring death unto them. Some, who are sick and morally lacking, believe that killing other will satisfy their unsatisfied desires.

Sin caused death. Man could not avoid having to deal with the Covenant of Life that the Lord God in the Garden of Eden instituted. As a result of sin, man had to immediately suffer an eternal separation from God or spiritual death and thereafter experience the bodily death. How tragic!

When God first created Adam and Eve, man's spirit and soul were living and the body did not decay and did not know pain and sadness. Sin changed all of that. Sin brought both spiritual and bodily deaths to the fallen man. Thus, man was left in the state of hopelessness and despair. To them, God brought redemption and hope. God would recreate the fallen man to be a new creation in and through redemption found in Jesus Christ. The redeemed would experience the renewing of the soul while the body remained subject to the curse. Thus, fierce struggles between the renewed soul and un-renewed body, which still follows the old way of doing things, ensue, leading to pain and suffering. There are times when the soul is in pain and suffering because it is unable to overcome the stubbornness of the body. Many Christians become very disappointed when the renewed soul gives way to the old body. At such times, God will give us the strength for the renewed soul to overcome the demands of the old body by His Spirit and the compelling love of Christ. As we go through this kind of fierce spiritual battle, our bodies become tired and deteriorate with age and, when the time comes and the strength in our bodies evaporates, the soul and the body separate. We call this death.

When God made man, He formed him with the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of His life and the man then became a living soul according to the Bible. Therefore, man is made of two parts: soul and body. When man lives, these two parts remain one. But, when man dies, these two parts separate. The separation, however, is not the end of it all. God promised and will bring the two parts of man back together again at the appointed time. At that time, God will fully restore the decayed body into the resurrected body and the believers will live eternally in heaven but non-believers will be eternally tormented in hell.

Upon death, the believer's soul becomes perfectly holy. The believer is justified, i.e., declared to be righteous, but is not perfectly righteous. He is acceptable in the sight of God but is not perfect, until the time of his death. He is made acceptable by Jesus Christ and His righteousness and is able to enter into redemption by justification wrought by the grace of Christ, his soul remains in the sinful body being tainted by its urges and attacks. Upon his death, the soul of the believer will experience perfect freedom from his sinful body and would finally enter into the wonderful and restful arm of the Father in heaven.

Upon death, the non-believer's soul will fall into the bottomless pit of burning hell. There, he will eternally experience torment, pain and suffering beyond anyone's imagination.

What awaits the believer and non-believer is in stark contrast. Initially, however, the result of death upon either may seem the same. So, how do they differ? The separation of the soul and body at death is the same. The fact that the body returns to the ground is also the same for both. Even the resurrection of the body may appear to be the same upon the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The process seems very much alike but the results are in stark contrast.

The difference is in the purpose of resurrection. The believer's body is already predestined, before death, to experience the glory of God. On the other hand, the non-believer's body is predestined, before death, to experience the burning fire in hell. The believer's body will resurrect and be designed in such a way that his body will be able to participate in the glory of God without the threat of harm. The non-believer's body will also resurrect and be designed for a purpose that is different from that of the believer's body. The non-believer's body will be designed and constructed to be most sensitive and yet most durable to the burning, torment,

pain and suffering in hell for all eternity. The process may appear to be the same but the results are quite different. Thus, there are two different types of resurrection: one to glory and one to punishment. At death, this difference will become plain.

Let us touch upon two wrong teachings:

First, some have referred to death as the soul asleep but this is wrong. Death is not merely the soul asleep. There is no foundation in the Bible for this argument. Some have argued this because of certain references of death as “sleeping.” These references do not indicate that death is sleeping. Rather, they indicate that death is like sleeping. To certain extent, the sleep reminds of death and death reminds of the sleep. So, it is in this sense that the sleep is compared to death but death is not sleeping.

Second, the Roman Catholicism teaches that there is an inbetween state where the destination of the dead will be determined by the good works of many people on earth. They teach that this is true except for very few exceptions of people who achieve sainthood by the Roman Catholic Church. This is false and is completely unfounded in the Bible. This is a ridiculous argument.

Finally, let’s talk about the preciousness of the soul and the body. It is fairly easy for everyone to accept that the soul is precious in the Biblical context. But, is the body really precious in the Biblical context? When God created man, He did not just love the man’s soul. God loved the two part man. God sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to this earth in the body. And, God allowed Christ to die His bodily death so that we might receive restoration of our entire being, the body and the soul. At resurrection, God will finally bring our body and soul together, fully and perfectly holy. Therefore, we much not think to mistreat our bodies.

Death opens the gate to experiencing God’s perfect grace. Therefore, we do not need to fear death.

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**Westminster Confession of Faith**  
**CHAPTER XXXII**

***Of the State of Men after Death, and of the Resurrection of the Dead***

**1. The bodies of men, after death, return to dust, and see corruption:[a] but their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them:[b] 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.[c] And the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day.[d] Beside these two places, for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none.**

[a]. Gen. 3:19; Acts 13:36

[b]. Luke 23:43; Ecc. 12:7

[c]. Heb. 12:23; II Cor. 5:1, 6, 8; Phil 1:23; Acts 3:21; Eph. 4:10; Rom. 8:23

[d]. Luke 16:23-24; Acts 1:25; Jude 6-7; I Pet. 3:19

**2. At the last day, such as are found alive shall not die, but be changed:[e] and all the dead shall be raised up, with the self-same bodies, and none other (although with different qualities), which shall be united again to their souls forever.[f]**

[e]. I Thess. 4:17; I Cor. 15:51-52

[f]. John 5:25-29; Acts 24:15; Job 19:26-27; Dan. 12:2; I Cor. 15:42-44

**3. The bodies of the unjust shall, by the power of Christ, be raised to dishonour: the bodies of the just, by his Spirit, unto honour; and be made conformable to his own glorious body.[g]**

[g]. Acts 24:15; John 5:25-29; I Cor. 15:43; Phil. 3:21

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