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↖ **When We Die!**

Eschatology deals with such future events as the end of the world, Jesus' return, the resurrection, the final judgment, and the afterlife in heaven or hell. Our focus has primarily been on corporate eschatology – God's overall plan for human beings and creation as a whole, and how that plan is consummated.

But individual eschatology is also important. The focus of individual eschatology addresses questions like:

- “What happens to me when I die?”**
- “After death where do I go?”**
- “What will I do when I die?”**
- ”Is there life beyond the grave?”**

6



7

➤ ● **Individual Eschatology**

When we speak of eschatology, we must distinguish between individual eschatology and comic eschatology – those experiences which lie, on the one hand, in the future of the individual, and, on the other, in the future of the human race and indeed of the entire creation. The former will occur to each individual as he or she dies. The latter will occur to all persons simultaneously in connection with cosmic events, specifically, the second coming of Christ

(Millard Erickson – Introducing Christian Theology, p. 375)

8



The King of Terrors

Bildad quite rightly describes death as “the king of terrors” (Job 18:14), a troubling prospect that fills the human heart with dread (‘fear of death’ - Heb 2:15). This is not surprising given the biblical connection between death and human sin (‘you shall surely die’ - Gen 2:17; ‘the wages of sin is death’ - Rom 6:23). While our natural apprehension may be partly due to irretrievable personal loss or a fear of the unknown, it is the judicial aspect of death that makes it such a foreboding reality in Scripture: the correlation between sin, death and divine judgment (cf. Heb 9:27–28).

(Death and the Afterlife – Paul R Williamson)

9



Death and the Afterlife

²⁷ And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, ²⁸ so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

Heb 9:27–28.

10



Death: a Consequence of Sin

- For Adam and his offspring death was the result of human sin
 - You shall surely die - Gen 2:17, 3:19
 - Death in Adam - Rom 5:12-17
 - In Adam, all die - 1 Cor 15:22
- Scripture does not portray death as the end of our existence
- Beyond death, the Bible attests to the reality of some kind of afterlife, whether in a disembodied or re-embodied state.
- The Bible attests to the reality of some kind of afterlife, whether in a disembodied or re-embodied state.

11



What is Death?

What is death, however? How are we to define it? Various passages in Scripture speak of physical death, that is the cessation of life in our physical body. .. death is referred to in Ecclesiastes 12:7 as the separation of the body and soul (or spirit). In the New Testament, James 2:26 also speaks of death as separation of body and spirit. What we are dealing with in these passages is the cessation of life in its familiar bodily state. This is not the end of existence, however. Life and death, according to Scripture, are not to thought of as existence and nonexistence. But as two different states of existences. Death is simply a transition to a different mode of existence; it is not, as some tend to think extinction.

(Millard Erickson – Introducing Christian Theology, p. 376)

12

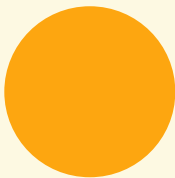


Existence Beyond the Grave

Traditionally the biblical concept of an afterlife has been understood in terms of two major phases: a disembodied “intermediate state” between physical death and bodily resurrection, and a re-embodied or “eternal state” associated with an eschatological resurrection and final judgment. More recently, the concept of an intermediate state has been challenged by those who reject any idea of a human soul (mainly on the grounds that the traditional distinction between body and soul owes more to Greek Platonism than to canonical Christian Scripture). Thus, any idea of a non-corporeal post-mortem existence intrinsically related to the concept of an “intermediate state” is often dismissed on the grounds that biblical anthropology is monistic rather than dualistic. Accordingly, the biblical concept of an afterlife is understood as a strictly post-resurrection experience - the latter being sometimes perceived as instantaneous “resurrection” at death, which ushers people outside time itself.

(Death and the Afterlife – Paul R Williamson)

13



Intermediate State

14



The Intermediate State

- The Intermediate State is the time from the point of death to the resurrection.
- The separation of body and soul through physical death is merely temporary.
- Body and soul will be reunited at the resurrection
 - Issuing in eternal life and immortality for some, or
 - The second death and everlasting shame for others.

15



The Intermediate State

- In the Old Testament
 - In the Old Testament the word “sheol” occurs sixty-five times and is translated by words like “grave,” “hell,” “pit,” and “sheol.” It is understood as the common destiny for all people - whether wicked or righteous.
 - The dominant focus of the Old Testament seems to be on the place where the bodies of people go, not where their souls exist
 - Genesis 37:35 - Jacob wishes to join Joseph in death, saying: “I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning.”
 - 2 Samuel 12:23 - David calls it the land of no return as he mourns his son.
 - Ps 139:7-10 – You are there!!

16



The Intermediate State

- In the New Testament
 - The New Testament term used to describe the afterlife is “hades” and is equivalent to the Hebrew term “sheol.”
 - The Sadducees dismissed any idea of disembodied spirits or the resurrection of the dead. The Pharisees, as well as the Jewish populace at large, embraced both these concepts (Acts 23:8–9).
 - Jesus addressed the Sadducean skepticism in Luke 20:27-40 when he defends not only the idea of a future resurrection, but also the idea of an intermediate state.

17



The Intermediate State

- Views on the Intermediate State
 - The Immortality of the Soul
 - The soul is immortal - but is there such a thing as a disembodied eternity as a soul residing in heaven?
 - But the end state for the saints, is a person – this is more than just a soul.

“Some devout Christians are captured with a vision that when they die, they will float about heaven like Casper the friendly ghost, play volleyball with the angels on the cloud, and glide between stars like a mannequin in outer space. To which we can “No,” for resurrection of the body and dwelling a terrestrial and glorified new creation is our destiny. The goal of redemption is redeemed creaturehood, not escape from creation.”

(Michael Bird, *Evangelical Theology*, p. 367)

18



The Intermediate State

- Views on the Intermediate State
 - Soul Sleep
 - Soul sleep is the doctrine that the soul is unconscious between one's death and resurrection.
 - The view assumes
 - Human existence is a unity of body and soul – if the body ceases to function, so must the soul, which must “sleep” until reunited with the body at the resurrection.
 - The word *sleep* is used as a euphemism for death and implies a cessation of consciousness after death
 - We shall not all sleep - 1 Cor 15:51
 - Those who are asleep - 1 Thess 4:13

19



The Intermediate State

- Views on the Intermediate State
 - Purgatory
 - Refers to a postmortem place of sanctification and/or satisfaction for sins, where the penitent are fully and finally purified prior to entering God's presence.
 - In the Roman Catholic tradition, saints are transported at death to heaven, while lesser souls must experience the cleansing of purgatory before entering the blessed state.

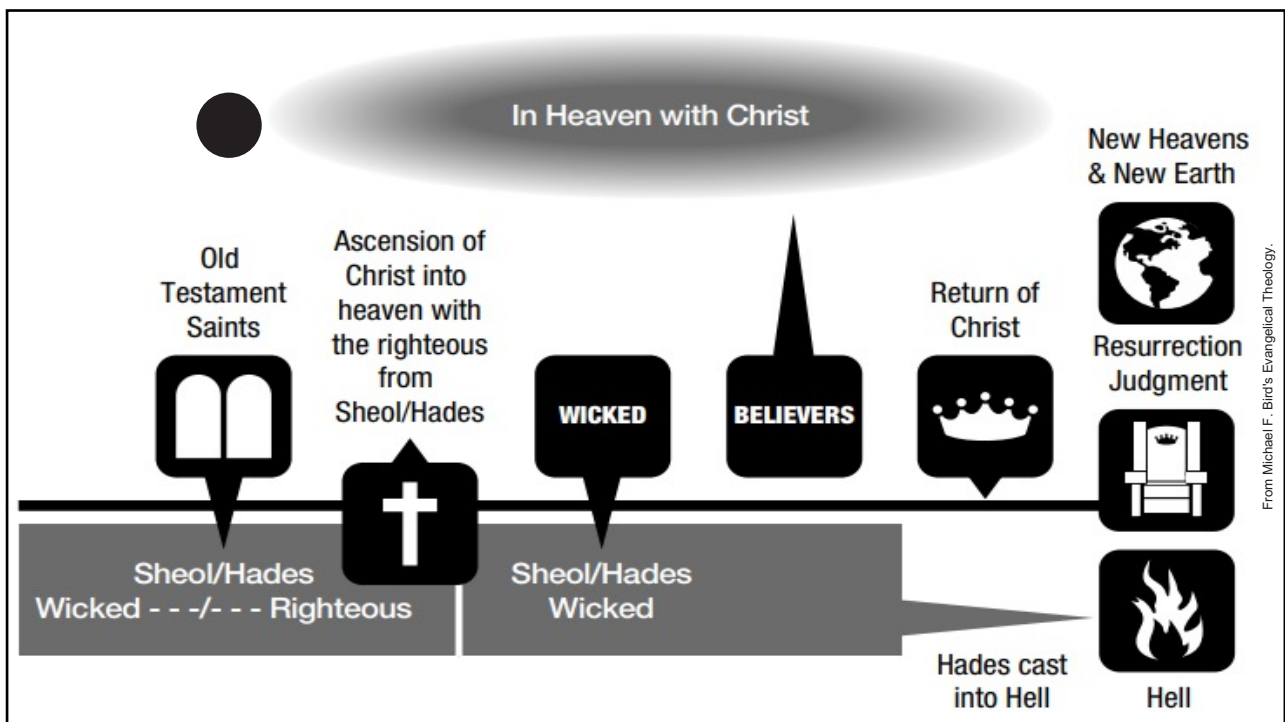
“All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven”
Catholic Catechism
 - 2 Maccabees 12:43-45 c.f. Heb 9:14

20

The Intermediate State

- Views on the Intermediate State
 - The Intermediate State in the Bible
 - The place of the dead in Scripture is described with two main words: Sheol in the Old Testament and Hades in the New Testament.
 - The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus - Luke 16:19-31 - gives the depiction of an afterlife that affirms an intermediate state in Hades prior to the final resurrection.
 - The Resurrection and the Life - John 11:17-26
 - Living in the Body verses Being with Christ - Phil 1:20-24
 - Away from the Body, and Home with the Lord - 2 Cor 5:1-10

21



22



The Intermediate State

- Summary of the Intermediate State
 1. Prior to Christ's ascension, all who died descended to Sheol/Hades, which was divided into two parts, one for the wicked and one for the righteous.
 2. At Christ's ascension, He went into heaven and took with him all of the saints in the paradisaic part of Sheol/Hades, while the wicked remain in Sheol/Hades, waiting for judgment.
 3. Upon death, new covenant believers go to be with Christ in heaven ahead of the general resurrection, while the wicked descend to Sheol/Hades waiting for judgment.
 4. Eventually Sheol/Hades will be thrown into hell and all believers will share in the new heavens and new earth (Rev 20:14).

23

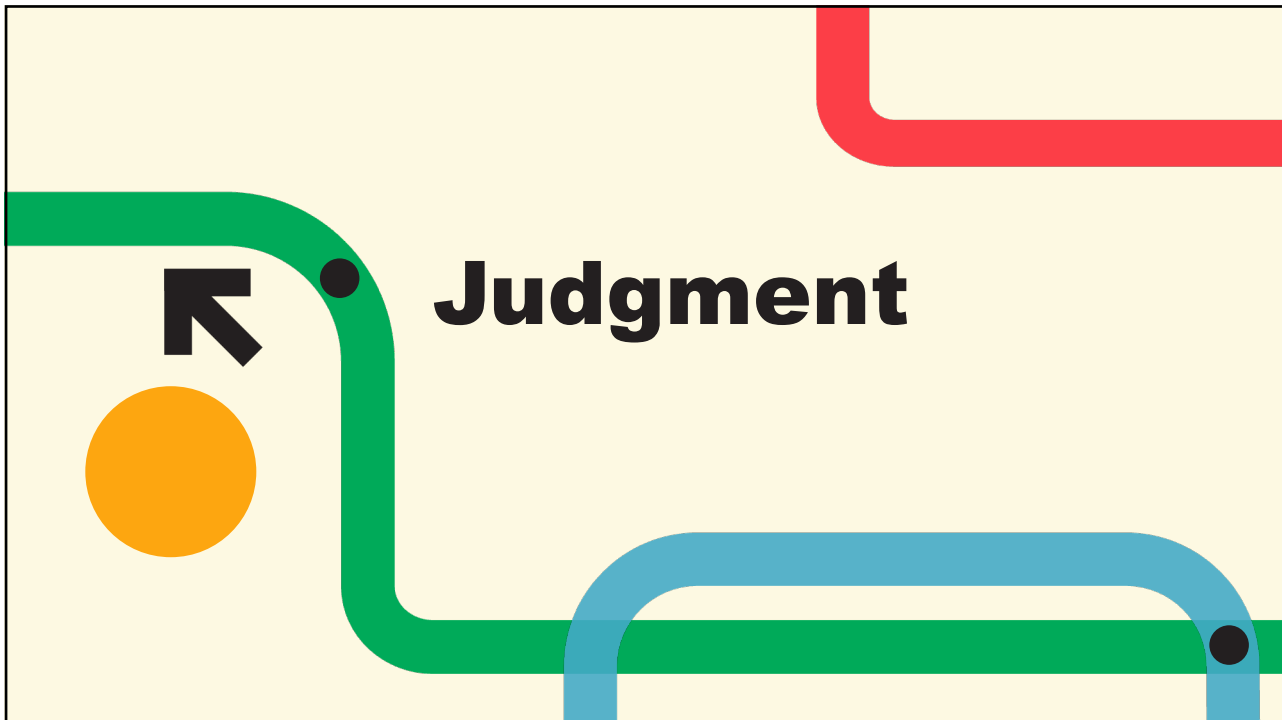


The Intermediate State

The intermediate state has to be articulated primarily in christological terms. Paul is clear that one departs to be with Christ (Phil 1:23), and according to John the Evangelist, where Christ is, there believers will also be (John 14:3). For nothing, not even death or demons, will separate believers from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8:38 – 39). The intermediate state brings fellowship with Christ, and in him we find also the continued fellowship of believers ahead of the final consummation (Heb 12:23). Death does not eradicate the believer's union with Christ or communion with fellow believers. Whatever life is ahead in the eschatological future, interim and final, it can only be a "life in Christ."

(Michael Bird, *Evangelical Theology*, p. 380)

24



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↖	●	Spiritual Death
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In addition to physical death, Scripture speaks of spiritual and eternal death. Spiritual death is the separation of the person from God. External death is the finalizing of that state of separation – one is lost for all eternity in his or her sinful condition. Scripture clearly refers to a state of spiritual deadness, which is an inability to respond to spiritual matters or even a total loss of sensitivity to such stimuli. This is what Paul had in mind in Ephesians 2:1-2. On the other hand, when the Book of Revelation refers to the “second death” (e.g. 21:8), it is eternal death which is in view. The second death is something separate from and subsequent to normal physical death. We know from Revelation 20:6 that the second death will not be experienced by believers. The second death is an endless period of punishment and of separation from the presence of God, the finalization of the lost state of the individual who is spiritually dead at the time of physical death.

(Millard Erickson – Introducing Christian Theology, p. 376)

26



Final Judgment

- Final Judgment refers to the eschatological judgment that will take place when Jesus returns to judge the living and the dead.
- The timing of Christ's return remains unknown (Matt 24:36), but events of that final day are revealed in Scripture.
- The dead will be raised (John 5:28–29; Acts 24:15) and all humanity - along with rebellious angels (2Pet 2:4; Jude 6) will be divinely judged (Rom 2:5-16; 2Cor 5:10a; Rev 20:11-13)
- Everyone will receive reward or punishment (2Cor 5:10b; Rev 20:14-21:8).
- There is considerable debate over the details, such as the significance of final judgment for Christians, how their final destiny should be understood, and the enduring nature of eschatological punishment.

(Adapted from The Final Judgment by Paul R. Williamson)

27



Eschatological Judgment

- Key Passages
 - **Hebrews 9:27-28** - ²⁷ And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, ²⁸ so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him. (ESV)
 - **Revelation 20:11-15** - ¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (ESV)

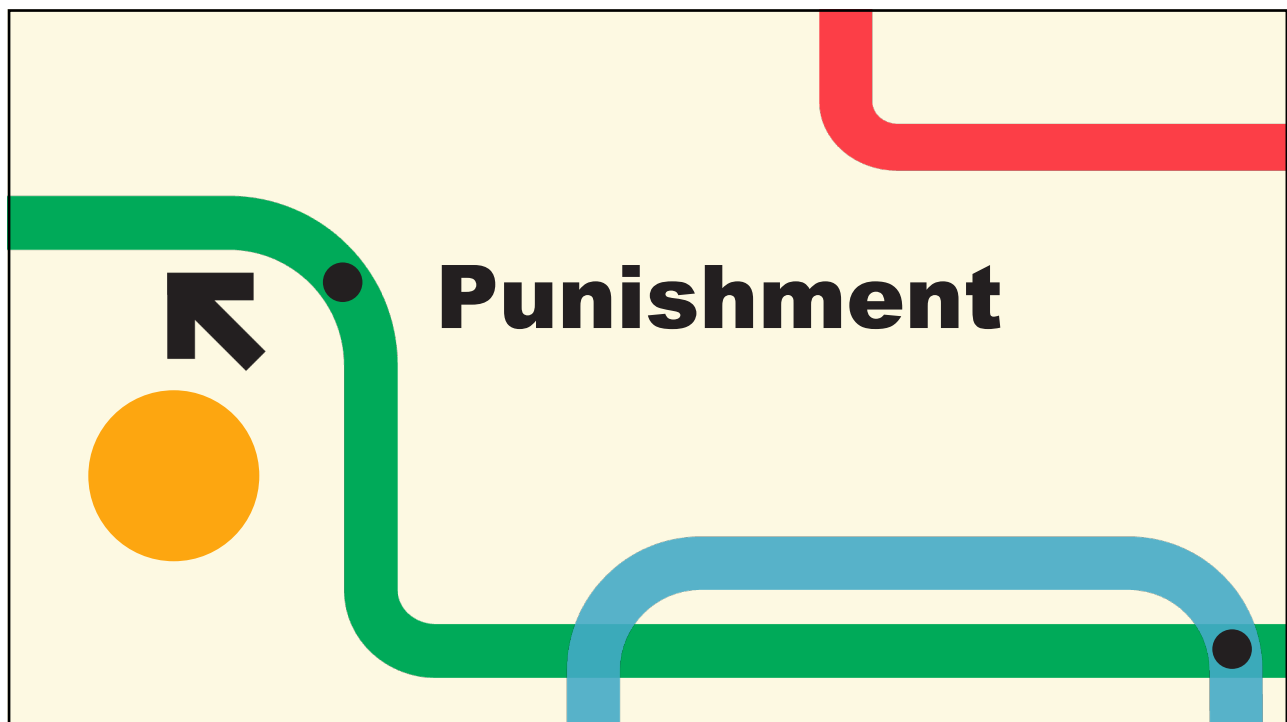
28



Eschatological Judgment

- The final judgment ushers in the end of human history and the beginning of the eternal state
 - God is perfectly just and fair – Matt 5:48, Acts 10:34 ,1 Jn 1:5
 - God cannot be deceived – Gal 6:7
 - God cannot be swayed by prejudices, excuses or lies – Lk 14:16-24
- All unbelievers will be judged by Christ at the “great white throne”
 - They will be punished according to the works they have done. (Rom 2:1-6)
 - The fate of the unsaved will be in the hands of the omniscient God who will judge everyone according to their soul’s condition.
- Believers will also be judged at the “judgment seat of Christ” (Romans 14:10)

29



30



Hell

- The Bible teaches that hell is a real place for the wicked/unbelieving.
- Hell is mentioned 167 times in the Bible (Gehenna, Hades, the pit, the Abyss, or everlasting punishment - Pro 7:27; Lk 8:31; 10:15; 2 Thess 1:9).
- Jesus spoke of heaven and hell as real places (Matt 13:41–42; 23:33; Mark 9:43–47; Luke 12:5).
- The story Jesus told about the rich man and Lazarus demonstrated the reality of the two eternal destinations (Luke 16:19–31).
- We all deserve hell as the just punishment for our rebellion against God (Romans 6:23).
- Hell is a place of misery and suffering; hell is where torment and anguish never cease (Revelation 14:11).
- Whether the flames are literal or symbolic, we can be certain that all this world has to offer, is not worth the forfeiture of our eternal souls (Mark 8:36–38).

31



Hell

- The punishment of the wicked dead in hell is described as
 - “eternal fire” (Matthew 25:41)
 - “unquenchable fire” (Matthew 3:12)
 - “shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2)
 - a place where “the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:44-49),
 - a place of “torment” and “fire” (Luke 16:23-24),
 - “everlasting destruction” (2 Thessalonians 1:9),
 - a place where “the smoke of torment rises forever and ever” (Revelation 14:10-11),
 - a “lake of burning sulphur” where the wicked are “tormented day and night forever and ever” (Revelation 20:10).

32



Challenges to Eternal Punishment

- Universalism
 - All human beings will be gathered into the love of God and be saved.
 - Universalists claim that a loving God would never allow anyone to suffer forever in hell.
 - If there is a hell, it is a place of purification, preparing souls for ultimate salvation.
 - Arguments for universalism take an exegetical approach, looking at texts that seem to use universal redemption or restoration language (John 3:17; Rom. 11:32; Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:20–21; 1 Tim. 2:3–6; 1 John 2:2), and/or a theological approach, related especially to universalists' views of God's love and final victory

(Adapted from Contemporary Challenges to External Punishment by Christopher Morgan)

33



Challenges to Eternal Punishment

- Annihilationism
 - Those who die apart from saving faith in Christ will be ultimately destroyed.
 - Annihilationists reject the historic view of hell as conscious, endless punishment.
 - The destruction of unbelievers will take place after a period of punishment in hell, which will also pass away at the new creation.
 - The most popular version of annihilationism in evangelical thought today is conditionalism (often called conditional immortality). Conditionalism is the belief that God has created all human beings to be only potentially immortal. Upon union with Christ, believers participate in the divine nature and receive immortality. Unbelievers never receive this capacity to live forever and thus will ultimately cease to exist.

(Adapted from Contemporary Challenges to External Punishment by Christopher Morgan)

34



35

The Resurrection of Christ

Christ's resurrection is the foundational event for the Christian faith. Paul goes so far as to say that if Christ did not rise, then the Christian faith is futile, and Christians are to be pitied more than all others (1 Cor. 15:17–19). Resurrection's climaxing position in all four Gospel narratives yields the same understanding. Christ came not merely to die, as some claim, but to conquer death. Resurrection gives everything that Christ did before his death an "of God" significance, and it establishes everything that follows as a guarantee of God's eschatological promises

'Resurrection', The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary, p. 1415

36



Our Resurrection

- The New Testament connects Jesus' resurrection with our final bodily resurrection.
 - “And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power” (1 Cor. 6:14).
 - “He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence” (2 Cor. 4:14).
- The most extensive discussion of the connection between Christ's resurrection and our own is found in 1 Corinthians 15:12–58.
- Paul says that Christ is the “first fruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor. 15:20).
- After Jesus' resurrection, He still had the nail prints in his hands and feet and the mark from the spear in his side (John 20:27). The scars from Jesus' crucifixion are unique because they are an eternal reminder of his sufferings and death for us. The fact that he retains those scars does not necessarily mean that we shall retain ours. Rather, all will be healed, and all will be made perfect and whole.

Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 615–616.

37



Our Glorification

- When Christ redeemed us, He did not just redeem our spirits (or souls) - He redeemed us as whole persons, including the redemption of our bodies.
- The application of Christ's work of redemption will not be complete until our bodies are entirely set free from the effects of the fall and brought to that state of perfection.
- The redemption of our bodies will only occur when Christ returns and raises our bodies from the dead. Paul says that we will be “glorified with him” (Rom. 8:17).
- When Paul traces the steps in the application of redemption, the last one He names is glorification.

“And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified” (Rom. 8:30).

Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 828.

38



Our Glorification

- The day we are glorified, the last enemy, death, will be destroyed:
 - “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).
- The resurrection of our bodies occurs when Christ returns
 - “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 Cor. 15:54–55).
- When our bodies are raised from the dead, we will experience complete victory over the death. Then our redemption will be complete.

Glorification is the final step in the application of redemption. 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.

Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 828.

39



Questions & Discussion

40



41

LIVING THE DRAMA

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

IT ANSWERS LIFE'S BIGGEST QUESTIONS

Q: Who am I?
A: Creation says you were created by God to bear his image and to live in this world as his representative.

Q: Why do I exist?
A: Creation says you were created to live sinlessly in perfect relationship with both God and man.

Q: Why is the world so imperfect?
A: The fall tells us sin is an evil intruder into this world. Humanity brought sin into the world, and it is all our fault.

Q: What am I here for?
A: Creation says you were made by God and made in the image of God; you have great significance and great worth.

Q: Is there any solution to this mess?
A: Redemption says through the death and resurrection of Jesus, the curse of death and sin was defeated and we gained the power to have new life before God.

Q: Is there hope for the future?
A: New Creation tells us at some point in the future, God will bring an end to all this pain, suffering, and sin.

42

