

LORD'S DAY 22

57. Q. What comfort does
the resurrection of the body offer you?

A. Not only shall my soul
After this life
Immediately be taken up
to Christ, my Head,¹
but also this my flesh,
raised by the power of Christ,
shall be reunited with my soul
and made like Christ's glorious body.²

1. **Luke 16:22** So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried.

Luke 23:43 And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

Philippians 1:21-23 For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.²² But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell.²³ For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.

2. **Job 19:25,26** For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth;²⁶ And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God,

1 Corinthians 15:20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

1 Corinthians 15:42-46 So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is

raised in incorruption.⁴³ It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.⁴⁴ It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.⁴⁵ And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.⁴⁶ However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual.

1 Corinthians 15:54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

Philippians 3:21 ...who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

1 John 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

58. Q. What comfort do you receive
from the article about
the life everlasting?

A. Since I now already
feel in my heart
the beginning of eternal joy,¹
I shall after this life
possess perfect blessedness,
such as no eye has seen,
nor ear heard,
nor the heart of man conceived -
a blessedness in which to praise God forever.²

1. **John 17:3** And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

Romans 14:17 ... for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 5:2,3 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven,³ if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked.

2. **John 17:24** Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

1 Corinthians 2:9 But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

Death is something which frightens us because it is so alien to God's intention for creation. God never created man to die. Death is a result of man's fall into sin and God's just judgment upon sin.

Yet we have seen sometime ago (cf. Lord's Day 16) that our death is no longer a judgment of God against us. Our death is not a payment for sin. Rather, our death puts an end to sin and is an entrance into eternal life. Christ, by taking our judgment upon Himself, has taken the sting out of death. It remains an enemy, but a conquered enemy. We know that death cannot hold onto us. Christ has broken death's grip.

As a result of Christ's work, we are able to profess our faith in the resurrection of the body, and in life everlasting. There are many questions that arise concerning what happens at death, and there are many wrong ideas. The idea that all life ceases at death is wrong. For Christ said, *"I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live."* (John 11:25). That does not deny that believers will die the physical death. That is not what Christ was saying. Christ only said that at death, life continues. For although our bodies perish and return into dust, from which they were made, yet our souls shall live. Immediately at death, our soul ascends to be with Christ. Christ promised this to the thief who was crucified beside Him: *"Today you shall be with me in Paradise."*

The idea that the soul sleeps at death is also wrong. Death is often referred to as sleep, but that is only a manner of speaking about death. Christ said to His disciples, *"Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up."* His disciples took Christ literally, but John corrects this when he writes, *However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that he was speaking about taking rest in sleep* (John 11:11f.). Even when Scripture speaks of death as sleep, there is the statement that we live with Christ. In 1 Thessalonians 5:10 we read, *...that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.* If

we are alive, we shall live with Christ. Yet even if we die we shall live with Him.

There are some texts that appear to teach that there is no conscious existence after death. In Ecclesiastes 9:5,10 we read, *"For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going."* Yet one does injustice to this text if he does not realise that the preacher views all things from the vantagepoint of this present life. That comes out clearly in vs. 6, *Also their love, their hatred and their envy have now perished. Nevermore will they have a share in anything done under the sun.* The phrase *under the sun* refers to this present life, to life on this side of the grave. The author is not speaking about what happens on the other side of the grave. He only remarks that for those who die, their life on earth comes to an end. That is the meaning also of vs. 10. Christ spoke in a similar way in John 9:4, *I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.* The day refers to life, and the night refers to death. Christ had to do the tasks God assigned for this life prior to His death. Christ would not have the opportunity to do the things after His death that is assigned for this life. Such is the meaning also of the Preacher. In this life we are to do the work and enjoy the blessings that belong to this life.

There are places in Scripture that show that the saints are very much alive and conscious in heaven. In the Revelation to John, we read about the souls of the martyrs, who pray, *"How long, Lord Jesus?"* (Revelation 6:10) It is also said that the saints reign with Christ in heaven. (Revelation 20:4). Moreover, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, both he who is in heaven and he who is in hell are very conscious of their condition.

Perhaps the most convincing of all are those texts wherein Paul says that he would rather be away from the body and

present with Christ (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:6-8; Philippians 1:21-24 cf. also Ecclesiastes 12:7). From this clear testimony, Paul envisions the possibility and reality of life outside of the body or life in the spirit in the presence of Christ. Paul makes a confession of the communion that he hopes to enjoy with Christ after death and not merely an unconscious sleep in Christ's presence!

Christ also promised the thief on the cross that he would enjoy immediate communion with Christ when He said, "*Today you will be with Me in Paradise*" (Luke 23:43). He also promised His disciples that He was going to prepare a place in His Father's house, so that they might be where He is (cf. John 14:1f.).

Very little is said about the condition of life for the ungodly during this time between death and the resurrection. We have only the parable of Lazarus and the rich man. (Luke 6:19ff.). In this parable we read that the rich man was in torment. We must realise that this is a parable, which means that not all the details are necessarily to be taken literally. Neither is it important for us to know the answer to this. Nevertheless, if one is permitted to make an assumption, then it would be that the ungodly will consciously experience suffering and torment as a foretaste of the judgment that awaits them after the resurrection.

At the resurrection, there is a reunion of body and soul. The body we receive at the resurrection is a glorified body, a body redeemed from the curse of corruption to which all flesh is subjected in this life. In this life the body is beset with illness, disease and deformities. Yet the body which is raised is a glorified body. The seed that is sown is not the same as the plant that grows from it. The body that is laid in the grave is not the body that is raised. It is a glorious body, free from all consequences of sin.

At the resurrection, our soul is joined with our body. In this glorified state, we live eternally with our God. There is often a mistaken notion as to where we will spend

eternity. Often one comes across the idea that we will live in heaven forever and ever. Yet that is not true. Those who die in Christ dwell with Him in heaven until He comes again to judge the living and the dead. Scripture declares that when Christ comes, He will renew the earth. The curse will be lifted from creation, and it will be like Paradise restored (cf. Romans 8:21, Revelation 21:1). On this renewed earth, man will live. The glorified body which we receive at that time is a physical body, one that is suitable for life on earth, just as it was in the first days of creation before the fall into sin.

Scripture teaches that even the unbelievers and ungodly will be raised from the dead. Yet their resurrection will be to judgment (cf. John 5:28,29). They will receive back their bodies, and they will "*be punished with the most severe, that is, with everlasting punishment of body and soul*" (cf. Q & A 11).

Those, however, who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ will receive everlasting life. When the Catechism speaks of everlasting life, it shows us that the nature of that life will not be totally different from what we experience now. For we who believe in Christ, and who have been renewed through His Spirit, already experience the beginning of eternal joy.

The Catechism speaks of eternal "*joy*" and not simply of eternal "*life*". By choosing to speak of joy, the Catechism describes the nature of eternal life, namely, that it will be a life of endless joy and bliss. Already we experience the joy of our salvation. For now already we experience life, real life, both spiritual and physical life.

We should look for a moment at what we mean when we speak about life. What is life? Often we relate life to the physical realm. If our heart beats, we say that we are alive. However, life is much more than that. To be truly alive is to have fellowship with God. "*This is eternal life, that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*" (John 17:3).

Life is defined as communion or fellowship with God. Death is defined as just the opposite, as separation from God. Paul describes eternal death as “*everlasting destruction from the **presence** of the Lord and from the glory of His power*” (2 Thessalonians. 1:9).

communion with the Father through Jesus Christ. It is not yet the perfect communion that it shall be once all sin and evil is removed. We already experience the joy of having fellowship with God. That is life, real life according to the Scriptures.

We begin to experience the joys of eternal life already here and now. We have

The following diagram illustrates the history of our salvation in Christ.

Paradise	Man was spiritually alive and physically alive
Fall into sin	Man died spiritually, and was subject to physical death too.
Rebirth or regeneration	Man is made spiritually alive. He is subject to physical death, but promised the resurrection of the body.
Death	Man remains spiritually alive, and his soul goes to be with Christ in heaven. Yet his body dies and goes to the grave.
Resurrection	Man, who is spiritually alive, is reunited with His body that is also made alive.
Eternal life	Man is spiritually alive and physically alive.



Questions:

1. Is death still an enemy for us? Why (not)?
2. Does all life cease for believers at death?
3. Does the soul sleep in the period between death and the resurrection? What does Scripture say on this matter?
4. How must we interpret the words of Ecclesiastes 9:5,10 “*For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going.*”
5. Show from Scripture that the souls of those who have died are very much alive and conscious?
6. Which state did the apostle Paul consider better: being at home in the body and away from the Lord, or separated from the body and at home with Christ? What does this tell us about the life between death and the resurrection?
7. What happens to the ungodly in the time between death and the resurrection?
8. What happens to our body and soul at the resurrection? With what kind of body are we raised?
9. After the resurrection, where will believers live? Will it be the same as it is now?
10. What happens to the ungodly at the time of the resurrection?
11. Why does the Catechism speak about everlasting *joy* rather than everlasting *life*?
12. How does Scripture define eternal life? How does it describe eternal death?